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The Gardner's sit-in
Who'll be hurt by the coming U-turn



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THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION is decided: the leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party will now be decided next Monday. Coming fortuitously together, the two events bring some spiky political facts into focus.

The PLP election is one in a series of events which will decide — probably quite soon — whether Britain is capable of maintaining a coherent political movement based principally upon the electoral loyalty of the working-class. The American election is chiefly significant because of its demonstration that the United States is not capable of doing so: indeed, because it shows that in electoral terms America's claim to be a democracy is now only marginally credible.

The judgement may seem overharsh. But when millions of American adults are not on the electoral register, and only 52 per cent of those that are chose to vote on Tuesday, then it seems reasonable to say that democracy is in questionable condition. Despite his clear victory over Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan is the positive choice of less than one in four of his fellow citizens.

Even from a British viewpoint, with (most recently) a 76 per cent turnout last year, on a register which includes nearly all our people, this appears a scanty mandate. (Thirty-three per cent of British adults voted for Thatcher.) But Anglo-Saxons readily forget that Britain itself, among advanced Western societies, suffers from comparative political lethargy. In Austria, Australia, Belgium, Luxembourg, West Germany, Italy and Sweden recent national elections have involved 90 per cent or more of qualified voters: Denmark, Holland, France and Norway have been in the 80-90 per cent band. Exact rankings would be contentious, but America's place at the bottom end of any electoral participation scale is scarcely open to distrust.*

CONTRIBUTORY REASONS for political behaviour may be as various as national tradition itself, and in some of the countries cited a vote may be valued more because there are very recent memories of tyranny. But where all of these countries approximately resemble each other, and where all of them differ from America, is that they all have parties — as various, admittedly, as communists and social democrats — which afford some real political autonomy to wage-earners and their families. In America the modern Democratic Party, essentially a geographical coalition, may have had aspirations in that direction — but nothing more. Large numbers of Americans, therefore, are politically impotent because there is no party which can credibly engage their loyalty.

It used to be argued with confidence, even bravura, that America had matured by escaping from outmoded European ideas of class and politics. Yet the practical reality of American politics, both domestic and international, is febrile and unstable: a tendency which intensifies as a once-superabundant economy, and a once-invincible war machine encounter challenges with which neither of them was designed to cope.

Sub-marxist pieties aside, there is no point in sentimentalising workers, or any other class. But there is a workable politics, common to the industrial societies of Europe,

which assumes that working-class organisations — however imperfect, or even antiquarian in spirit — must provide the indispensable muscle power in every long-term alliance for the remodelling of the status-quo. The American polity may, after all, be superior, or (what is more likely) better-suited to America. What is beyond essential doubt is that it is wholly unlike any other Western system.

AND HERE WE return to Britain's predicament. The Labour leadership up to now has assumed, along with an Establishment majority in general, that the 'Special Relationship' is a comfortable expression of the fact that America is a society very similar to our own. The illusion is the stronger because it has some honourable aspects: Labour has been free of the unlovely anti-American snobbery with which some kinds of Tories compensate for their Atlantic inferiority complex, and has been powerfully attracted by the constitutional libertarianism which makes up the most valuable part of the American tradition.

We could indeed become like America, because our one credible workers' party — not, incidentally, one which can ever be exclusively a workers' party — is organisationally fragile, and is suffering steady erosion of its basic electoral support. But this has not yet happened: arguments aside over the rights and wrongs of the EEC, we remain a somewhat eccentric example of the modern European political pattern.

The business of a new Labour leader will be to seek remedies for the party's structural and constitutional disrepair, and from the viewpoint of the *New Statesman* — not one inclined to find decisive virtue in the personality either of Mr Healey or Mr Foot — the best news is that the winner is unlikely to achieve any clear-cut dominance in Westminster, and so will be driven by political reality towards compromise with the unions and the constituency parties.

Whatever the composition of Labour's long-term leadership, it will have to deal with new geopolitical realities. For reasons which Godfrey Hodgson has analysed — see page 27 — a Reagan presidency may not be quite the cataclysm some people envisage. But, though only fools or rogues can desire or expect the instant dissolution of the Western alliance, the likeliest consequence of Reagan will be a widening of the gulf between America and Europe. In order to meet that challenge, Labour will need policies more substantial than the unswerving Atlanticism of Mr Healey's record, or the neutralist pieties of Mr Foot's.

*Compulsory voting is often associated with high turnout, but doesn't obviously explain it. Voluntary Sweden and West Germany, for instance, usually out-poll compulsory Holland.

NEXT WEEK

Parliament returns — but does its machinery work? And can it be made to work for Labour? A new inquiry into the powergame at Westminster.

pay something below 200p a share for the whole company — an offer described as 'derisory' by Hugh Gardner. Clayton Flint waited until mid-1977 when the much larger Hawker Siddeley — flush with cash from nationalisation compensation — came up with an offer of 340p a share: £14 million in total for a company making profits of over £3 million. In addition Hawker are spending a further £17 million on new technology and new plant.

The Gardner family did astonishingly well from the sale. About twelve of them received a total of £5 million; some members of the family who did not work for the company made £700,000. Clayton Flint himself made a more modest profit — with his wife, he sold 15,000 shares — virtually all of which had been bought in the last two years — making a profit of at least 140p a share. But also, since 1972, Mr Flint had been trustee for two Gardner family trusts which together owned 160,000 shares worth almost £550,000 under the terms of the Hawker offer. As trustee Flint had an

obligation to look after the best interests of the Gardner family. Faced with a highly attractive bid from Hawker Siddeley he would naturally choose this rather than the more speculative possibility of making a future for the company as an independent manufacturer or as a significant partner in a joint venture.

It is not, of course, possible to say whether Gardner could have survived intact by itself or whether a deal with Rolls or any of the other companies which showed an interest would have been better for the future of the company. However, its fate does highlight several features of the current organisation of British capitalism. First, the company's ownership — and therefore future — was significantly affected by the absence of a 'natural successor' within the family which owned much of its capital. Second, the system provided this family — some of whom contributed little to the company — with an easy way of withdrawing their capital from the industry — but provides the workers with no such flexibility. The workers and their families are now

trying to survive on weekly strike pay of £9. Third, the ultimate ownership of the company within a large diversified group places a harsher financial discipline on it (Hawker as a group make profits of around £100m.) that may be at odds with the industrial realities: Hawker, like the Gardner family, have the scope to remove their, in this case *future* capital from the business.

Hawker's bid was described to both the shareholders — all of whom received the 340p a share offer — and the workers of Gardners as being the best way of securing the long term future of the company. There was a specific undertaking that there would be no redundancies as a result of the offer. This undertaking was, of course, given three years ago and in the time scale of the City of London — one of whose leading merchant banks put their name to this undertaking — that is a long time. When you have invested the whole of your working life in a company and when this investment cannot be so easily withdrawn as can a share certificate, it is a relatively short time.

SHIPPING
Rob Rohrer

British shipowners have deprived seamen of £200 million in wages

The high profits of racial discrimination

LEGALLY SANCTIONED racial discrimination by British shipowners has deprived Indian seafarers of more than £200 million in wages over the last four and a half years. This remarkable statistic was admitted to the *New Statesman* this week by a senior official of the General Council of British Shipping — the employers' body — and represents the money that would have given Indian seafarers, serving under the UK flag, parity with British crews working for the same owners.

An Indian seafarer receives a weekly wage of £13.15, compared with £64 for the British counterpart, and it is the Indian who works the longer week (four hours extra) and spends more time at sea — often nine months without leave.

The figure of £200 million is an estimate of the wages saved for British shipowners by a controversial and deliberate loophole left in Section 9 of the Race Relations Act 1976, which excludes employment on ships from statutory protection. This year British shipowners, employing around 9,500 non-British seafarers, will save approximately £25 million in unpaid wages. P&O Shipping Group — the largest employer, with 1,600 Asian crew members — will withhold about £5 million, although some of this, according to a spokesman, will be prudently deposited in a 'contingency fund'.

Since 1976 British union efforts to ameliorate the effects of the loophole have failed. The present government has shown a clear disinclination to persuade shipowners or the Indian government to accept equal pay, let alone enforce it by the simple measure, provided for in the Act, of laying an Order in the House of Commons withdrawing Section 9. Significantly, the government's unwillingness to ensure equal pay for Indians on British ships coincides with their refusal to publish the names of British companies in South Africa which are paying wages below the poverty datum line to black employees.

THE BRITISH shipowner's dependence on cheap Asian labour has its roots in the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly in an Act of 1823 which proposed discriminatory staffing scales because Asians were 'not deemed to be equal in

strength and use to European and other seamen'. The low wage rates were embodied in law in the 1919 Aliens Restrictions Act.

The most determined move to end contemporary wage discrimination followed pressure from the National Union of Seamen. In 1976 the Labour government set up the Employment of Non-domiciled Seamen enquiry (ENDS). The ENDS report in 1977 laid down a formula accepted by the British government, the NUS and the ship-owners, to phase out wage inequality.

Although the ENDS report unanimously opposed the principle of wage discrimination, some of its defeatism showed through:

Equality of pay must be spread over a number of years and is beset by so many uncertainties . . . that setting a firm date by which equality throughout the United Kingdom merchant fleet will have been reached is at present impracticable. We conclude that a short-term move to pay Indian ratings the full United Kingdom rate might well replace one form of unequal treatment by another by making them so much better off in real terms than their United Kingdom counterparts that dissatisfaction among the latter might result.

The ENDS gradualists favoured a phased increase, beginning with five annual rises of £20 a month, bringing the Indian seafarer's basic wage to £141 a month by 1982, still a long way short of the UK rate. Further talks on a timetable for additional rises were planned for January 1980. The Labour government accepted the report's recommendations but no Indian seafarer has received a single payment in the last three years. The January talks were not held, and the present government has given its discreet blessing to the shipping industry's unwillingness to reduce the differential.

British shipowners, who happily concede that they employ Asian ratings as cheap labour, say they cannot pay the agreed increases because of opposition from the Indian government. In its evidence to ENDS the Indian government opposed wage equality because of the reverberations it feared through the rest of the Indian economy, and because Indian ratings might no longer be used.

Support for this view came from predictable

quarters. The General Council of British Shipping added that an Indian seafarer paid at British rates would earn more than an Indian cabinet minister. Sam McCluskie, assistant general secretary of the NUS, remembers similar arguments: 'The Indian government told us it would make the Indian rating as well paid as a brain surgeon. But the damnable thing is they didn't say anything about the bloody Indian officers, who *are* paid the UK flag rate'.

The Indian government's worst fears about reduce job opportunities have been realised without any substantial pay increase for Indian crews. As Britain's merchant navy wallowed through the recession the numbers of non-domiciled seafarers fell from 16,500 in 1977 to 9,500 this year. In 1965 the numbers had been around 32,000.

The Indian government's resistance also found support in unlikely places. Both the Indian TUC and the country's seafaring unions oppose wage equality and the TUC dislikes the idea of shipowners paying the differential into a welfare fund for the benefit of all seamen regardless of the flag they are employed under. The TUC told the ENDS enquiry

Unlike many other areas here in India wages and conditions are freely negotiated by the owners and seamen. There is no direction from any quarter whatsoever.

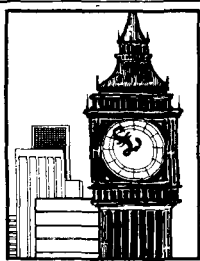
The Indian National Shipowners' Corporation — a government body — expressed its worries succinctly that the 'Indian seamen would be killed with kindness.'

Elsewhere in Indian government circles, however, confusion seems to reign. One International Transportworkers Federation official recalls a wage dispute in a British port involving an Indian crew:

The Indian High Commission rang to ask why we were stopping his chaps from getting higher wages. We had to explain it was the other way round.

Last year news filtered out of India that the Cabinet had finally decided to lift its objections to wage equality. But the decision was apparently short-lived, being reversed in the face of opposition from the Indian seafaring unions. These unions faced growing unpopularity among fellow members of the ITF and earlier

contd on p6



Peter Kellner, Political Editor

The coming U-turn — and why it will hurt

I SMELL A U-TURN in the air. That is not to say a U-turn will happen: there is many a slip, better known as John Biffen, twist cup and lip. But if there is a U-turn between now and next spring, it is now possible to identify what form it will take. It will come in easy stages, each one presented as no more than a mid-course correction, but cumulatively transforming a central feature of the Government's economic policy. Their components will be a cut in interest rates, a fall in the value of the pound, and a reduction in some of the charges levied on industry (like the national insurance surcharge). Their overall impact will be to arrest, or at least ameliorate, the decline in industrial profits; in return the rest of us will pay higher prices and higher taxes. It will be a U-turn that helps companies at the expense of consumers; it will have practically no impact on the level of unemployment.

The point is that there are U-turns and U-turns: those that reverse the whole direction of government policy-making, and those that merely send some of the passengers on a more comfortable route to oblivion. It is the second that the Government is now contemplating, in such a form that the first will be delayed for even longer.

The text for the next few months comes from the handbook of next week's Confederation of British Industry conference, page 7, resolution:

This conference supports the Government's strategy in making the defeat of inflation its top priority but draws attention to the damage being done to the country's industrial and commercial base and profitability and employment by the high value of sterling and high interest rates.

For some time the CBI has been shaping up for a quarrel with the Government. In its paper to the September meeting of the National Economic Development Council, the CBI wrote:

It is crucial to relieve the current financial pressures on companies so as to preserve the industrial base and provide the best possible foundation for resumed long-term economic growth . . . Many companies now feel that the Government must show a greater awareness of the difficulties which the high pound is causing for our industries.

Last week, the CBI published its 'blackest ever' survey of industrial trends. According to Sir Terence Beckett, the CBI's new director-general, 'we have not touched bottom yet. There is worse to come.' What the CBI wants is a package of measures that include: a cut of four per cent in interest rates; a lower value for the pound; abolition of the National Insurance surcharge; abolition of all local rates paid by manufacturing industry; an end to the four-month delay that the Government has imposed on the payment of Regional Development Grants; and the abolition of the duty on heavy fuel oil.

All told, these measures would save industry at least £7 billion a year. Or, to put it another way, most of that would have to be paid for in higher taxes from the rest of us — say, by raising the standard rate of income tax to 38p in the pound, or putting VAT up to 25 per cent.

The Government, of course, will not do all that. But it may do some of it — for example, halving the National Insurance surcharge, and paying for it by adding 2p to the standard rate of tax. More to the point it is likely to bring interest rates down — though not as fast and far as the CBI would wish.

The CBI's case on interest rates is this. At present high interest rates are hitting industry two ways: by making borrowing more expensive (especially for companies that are now in difficulties, and *have* to borrow to stay alive), and by making the pound an attractive currency for foreigners to invest in. If interest rates fell, borrowing would be cheaper, and the pound would be less attractive — and so would lose some of its value, giving British companies a better chance to compete against foreign rivals.

Ah yes, but are there not problems, if you accept the Government's monetarist credo? Did not Sir Geoffrey Howe tell MPs last week that monetary growth was vastly overshooting the Government's target — with the implication that any sharp reduction in interest rates would push money supply even further out of control? And do not this week's figures showing money supply up two per cent in four weeks prevent any chance of an early cut in interest rates?

The CBI's response is to the effect that these problems lie in the past — money

under the bridge, old boy — and that over the *next* few months money supply will grow only slowly. So a sharp cut in interest rates will be possible, *within the Government's future money supply targets.*

WHICH BRINGS US to the nub of the issue. When CBI members meet in Brighton next week there is bound to be considerable aggro, with critics of the Government's tactics on one hand, and critics of the CBI's fainthearts on the other. But, with the possible exception of a few delegates from the north, all they will be debating will be tactics. Few in the CBI are ready, despite the CBI's own bleak picture of its members' plight, to challenge the Government's monetarism head-on.

A more useful litmus test than interest rates is the table of inflation rates on this page. The items in the table cover 97 per cent of all the components of the retail prices index. It shows that prices directly influenced by government policy have risen twice as fast in the past year as those that are chiefly determined by the private market-place.

To a monetarist, these figures show that the Government's prescription is working. Inflation in the private sector is now relatively modest by the standards of the mid to late 70s. And if public sector pay and government borrowing can now be contained, then mortgage rates will fall, nationalised industry prices and rates can be contained, and the duty on drink and tobacco need not rise too fast. That is what the CBI, like the Government, maintains.

There is an alternative way of looking at the figures, however. While it is true that public sector pay settlements have been higher than private pay deals (offsetting the years of pay policy when the public sector stuck to the rules while the private sector did not), that only explains part of the government-induced price-rises. Higher mortgage payments, rates, council rents, public transport and energy prices, have all been exacerbated by higher interest rates and/or tight cash limits. High inflation in these sectors has happened *because* of monetarism, not despite it.

But what about the private sector — hasn't monetarism kept inflation down? Up to a point, Lord Copper. Because the pound is high, imports are cheap. And because of the recession, profit margins have been squeezed. The forces that have kept private sector inflation to 12 per cent are *precisely* those forces of which the CBI is now complaining.

So what the Government has ended up doing is this: it has created an old-fashioned depression that has separately but simultaneously crippled private industry, nationalised industries, and employment prospects, and kept overall price inflation at historically high levels.

The CBI would not need to be fearfully left-wing to point this out. But at present its voice is a grating mixture of plaintive squeals and special pleading. It is in danger of being dismissed by the Government as well as the unions as being no more than a cynical interest group. This may not surprise many NS readers; but to my mind, when Britain has a Tory government and unemployment careering towards three million, it is actually rather a pity.

Where Monetarism Creates Inflation

	Increase Sept '79 to Sept '80
Prices decisively influenced by government policy	
Mortgage interest payments	+48%
Electricity	+32%
Coal	+27%
Rates	+27%
Post & Telephone	+24%
Public transport	+22%
Rent	+22%
Alcoholic drink	+19%
Gas	+17%
Tobacco	+13%
WEIGHTED AVERAGE	+25%
Prices less directly influenced by government policy	
Books & newspapers	+25%
Entertainment	+19%
Misc. private services	+19%
Home maintenance	+17%
Meals out	+17%
Motoring	+12%
Soap, detergents, etc	+12%
Food	+11%
Stationery, toys, photography etc	+10%
Household durables	+9%
Clothing	+8%
WEIGHTED AVERAGE	+12%

Seamen's strike

Contd from p.4

this year both of them finished periods of suspension following disagreement with the ITF over flag of convenience issues. They have now effectively been told they can have jobs at the flag rate or not at all.

AT THE ENDS inquiry the British shipowners lamented the financial consequences if equal wages were implemented immediately. Additional costs in 1976 were estimated at £59 million for the manning levels used for Indian crews. The owners saw profits being undermined and significant sales of ships. In 1977 fourteen shipping companies surveyed made

profits of £111 million — a 9½ per cent return on capital.

The NUS countered these arguments by pointing to Norway's high labour cost shipping industry which has flourished, particularly in cruise ships where Britain has lost ground.

The ENDS report speculated that the 'registry of ships under other flags, although possible, appears less likely.' But the root cause of the present dispute between the NUS and Cunard is the latter's wish to retreat under flags of convenience employing concessionaire crews whose members receive £25 a month and are expected to make up the wage packet out of passengers' tips.

Donald Young, P&O's Asian Crew manager sits on the Indian National Maritime Board,

which negotiates Indian seamen's rates. He says that the March negotiations were tough, though the settlement was in the low 20 per cents, substantially lower than the original demand. His board accepts 'the concept of wage equalisation on the phased basis ENDS postulates.'

But under a future Labour government the shipowners may not enjoy the luxurious option of phased increases. John Prescott, MP for East Hull, a former seaman and a Labour Party spokesman on transport says

All these years have passed without any of the (phased increases) being implemented. At the end of the day we have to say we don't think this cheap labour should be available any longer to the ship-owners.

ITALY Tana de Zulueta

Businessmen, politicians and tax inspectors involved in massive petrol fraud

Making the Vestey's look like novices

'IN ITALY bread, milk and petrol should be nationalised. The flesh is weak, and there are just too many temptations.' Silvio Brunello speaks from experience: he is one of 90 oilmen and their accomplices arrested for defrauding the Italian exchequer of at least £1,000 million. In money terms at least, it is Italy's biggest post-war scandal.

You need friends in high places to conduct tax evasion on such a scale, and the most spectacular arrest so far is that of General Raffaele Giudice, who between 1974 and 1978 was head of the Guardia di Finanza, Italy's oldest police force, which is in charge of tax and customs controls. General Giudice is now in a Turin jail charged with smuggling, forgery, corruption and belonging to a criminal association. During his years of power at the Guardia di Finanza roughly 25 per cent of the petrol and oil derivatives consumed in Italy were avoiding tax. Somebody must have noticed, and indeed magistrates carrying out the investigation are not concealing their belief that some of the money was being channelled back to political parties.

This suspicion first arose in 1976, when Colonel Aldo Vitali, Commander of the Veneto region for the Guardia di Finanza, reported to his superiors in Rome that he believed he had uncovered a colossal tax dodge. He had also found a mysterious Liechtenstein company, which had interests in the main depots and refineries involved in the fraud and which, according to Vitali, was a front for 'a well-known politician (or a relative of his)'. Vitali was unable to discover the politician's name.

When he received the report, General Giudice made no effort to follow up Vitali's investigation. Instead, Vitali was transferred to Rome, where, safely out of harm's way, he was left to impart his impossibly high principles to trainee officers at the Guardia di Finanza's academy.

Giudice, meanwhile, relishing his role as the country's chief tax inspector, continued to be invited to the smartest Roman parties. In 1977 he drank champagne elbow to elbow with government ministers to celebrate the bestowal of a knighthood on Gaetano Caltagirone, a Roman constructor. Caltagirone has recently been arrested in New York and is wanted in Italy for defrauding the exchequer of £225 million.

As long as Giudice was in office the oilmen of the Veneto continued to operate in peace. Colonel Vitali was replaced with a more accommodating officer — who is also now in



jail. It was not until September 1978 that two junior officers of the Guardia di Finanza discovered that an obscure oil depot in the little town of Treviso, near Venice, was supplying its customers with false tax documents. When the two officers reported to their superior, they were offered £12,500 each to 'forget everything they had seen'. Instead they asked for an interview with the Treviso investigating magistrate, Domenico Labozzetta, and told him all they knew. By the end of the year the Treviso magistracy had ascertained that the network of petrol tax dodgers stretched from Venice right across the industrial north of Italy to Turin. So far over 200 people are wanted for questioning in connection with the operation.

THE MAGISTRATES should have got a whiff of what was going on as early as 1974, when the director of a Turin gas depot was found murdered outside his factory gates. The investigators suspected he had been blackmailing the depot owner, who was, it transpired, sending out loaded tankers accompanied by false tax documents. The depot owner disappeared but, having been acquitted of the murder, was sentenced in his absence for fraud. Nobody carried the investigation further — not even when an anonymous report landed on the judge's table explaining the relations between several Turin oilmen and some crooked refineries in the Veneto.

In Civitavecchia, just north of Rome, another magistrate's suspicions were aroused by the activities of a local refinery belonging

to Giuseppe Giudice, son of the arrested commander of the Guardia di Finanza. The magistrate soon discovered that the lynch-pin of the operation was the vice-director of the tax inspector's office in Rome. The officer was arrested, and was transferred to Treviso last week to help with inquiries. Giuseppe Giudice, it appears, was also a shareholder in one of the Veneto refineries under suspicion.

The investigators in the Veneto have not been having an easy time. First the Treviso magistrates received death threats. Then their main suspect, the leading Milan oilman Bruno Musselli, escaped to Switzerland after a tip-off. Half an hour before police could carry out a bank search, somebody had emptied Musselli's safe deposits. Nonetheless the magistrates did discover that Musselli had retained the services of three prominent socialist lawyers — two of whom are members of parliament and ministerial under-secretaries. Musselli had also, over the years, paid at least £25 million to the secretary of the senior Christian Democrat politician Aldo Moro. Shortly before Moro was kidnapped in 1978, Musselli had offered him a bullet-proof car, but Moro apparently refused. The same silver Alfa Romeo was then given to Bettino Craxi, head of the socialist party, who is still carried round Rome in it.

There have been plenty of rumours as to the identity of the 'well-known politician' mentioned in Colonel Vitali's original report. Last week the neo-fascist senator Giorgio Pisano declared that the political patron of the crooked oilmen from the Veneto was Antonio Bisaglia, the minister of state for industry and the leader of a powerful Christian Democrat faction. Bisaglia has denied the charge and threatened to sue, but the chief attorney's office has nevertheless opened a preliminary inquiry into Bisaglia's financial interests in the Veneto area.

Although the oil scandal is now a major political *affaire*, the Italian establishment has an extraordinary capacity for surviving even the nastiest revelations. The oil scandal of 1974, when a Genoa magistrate discovered that the oil companies were buying favourable laws by bribing politicians, was successfully buried by a parliamentary commission of inquiry which voted to drop proceedings against several ministers and members of parliament. There is no doubt that if the major parties in government feel themselves seriously threatened by this latest *scandalo del petrolio*, they will stage a repeat performance.

Inside your head is a substance that's far more valuable than North Sea Oil.



It's called grey matter. And that, not oil, is our greatest natural asset.

After all, it's going to have to solve the problems that will remain when the oil runs out.

Fortunately brain power is one commodity that Britain isn't short of.

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Powerlessness — and how to fight it

Why does power elude women in the trade union movement? They join in ever-increasing numbers, yet remain excluded from decision-making at all levels. ANNA COOTE investigates the obstacles which women encounter, and some measures designed to overcome them. Overleaf, PETER KELLNER analyses male and female attitudes to work and unions.

'If you ask me', said the male shop steward, 'women are their own worst enemy. If I was a woman in this factory and I wanted to put up for convenor, I'd feel sure I was going to walk it. There's 300 women on the books here and only 70 men. . . Mind, you don't want to change a good person just because you want to put a woman in, do you?'

'I must say, I despair of our girls sometimes', the senior woman official confided. 'They just don't seem to be interested in the union. There's nothing to stop them getting involved. I've never had any trouble, the men treat me just like one of them. Women have only got themselves to blame if they don't put themselves forward.'

'It wouldn't make any difference if there were more female shop stewards', said the woman on the shopfloor. 'Why should it? The union treats you the same whether you're a man or a woman. I mean, I'm paying my 35p the same as any man. They've got to treat you equal!'

THE SHOP FLOOR worker, whose name is Cathy, had just described to me the grading system in the glass factory where she worked, on the outskirts of Liverpool. Out of nine grades, the women were concentrated in the lower four. She felt particularly strongly about her own job, which involved stamping the glasses as they came off the assembly line: it was in grade three. 'We should be in grade seven. Machine operators are in grade six and it's an easier job. The ones in our room, if the machine's running smoothly, they can sit there all morning and read a paper, while I put in four and a half hours, continuously, like a robot.'

Cathy couldn't recall who had organised the grading system. She guessed the management alone had been responsible, although in fact it was negotiated with the unions. Could her union get her on to a higher grade? She shook her head: 'They've tried.' Had they tried hard enough? (Pause . . .) 'Well they can't have, can they, because we're still on grade three!'

Cathy belongs to the General and Municipal Workers Union, of whose 956,000 members, more than a third are female. Yet it has no women at all on its 40-strong national executive committee; of its 243 full-time officials, 13 are women; and only three of its 73 delegates to this year's Trades Union Congress were female.

The GMWU is no exception, as the table shows (opposite right). Nor is Cathy's predicament unusual. In most work places in Britain, women are concentrated in the lower-paid grades — and this often fails to reflect the value of their work. It isn't hard to detect a link between the two factors: if women are not active in their unions, their needs are less likely to be given priority in the course of collective bargaining. But it is far more difficult to isolate the causes. *Why* don't women exercise power in the union in proportion with their numbers? What's holding them back?

The New Statesman/MORI poll, described by Peter Kellner (p.11) suggests there are only minimal differences between male and female attitudes towards employment and trade unionism. Generally speaking, it looks as though women are satisfied with their lot and, should they wish to play a more active role, men are not bent on blocking their way. These findings are echoed in the remarks of the male shop steward and the senior female official. However, my own investigations, backed up by what little research has been done in this country, suggest there are more complex feelings beneath the surface.

Most women who experience unfair pay and powerlessness have scarcely begun to articulate it as a grievance, let alone to identify solutions to the problem. When I talked to Cathy, together with three of her workmates, it was the first time any of them had discussed the link between their pay and their own participation — as women — in the union. After two hours of mulling the question over they were seeing things in quite a different light. (And I swear I fed them no lines!) Early in the meeting, one said emphatically that men should be paid more than women; the conversation turned to redundancies (two were afraid their husbands would lose their jobs), and to the grading system in the factory; after some 20 minutes, I reminded her of what she had said. 'No: scratch that. Because nowadays you get a lot of women on their own, and women left working when their husbands are put out of work. I never really gave that thought before.'

IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES men, too, suffer from unfair pay and powerlessness — for instance at a workplace where the union is poorly organised, or where the wages of one group have fallen behind those of others. But

the causes can be identified with relative ease; the business of tackling such problems has been the main task of the trade unions for more than a century. By contrast, the reasons why women are low-paid and weak within the unions are highly complex, ranging far beyond the economic relationship between workers and employers. They are not a familiar part of trade union language. There are no established channels for talking about them. There is no bank of experience on which to draw to solve the problems of working women.

Sarah Boston, in her book published earlier this year¹ records the long and frustrating struggle of women to gain an equal voice in the unions. As she points out, it is not that men have conspired to keep women down; it is just that the machinery they have set up to protect their own interests has time and again failed to accommodate the needs of women. The campaign for the Equal Pay Act was supported by the unions, yet it amounted to an admission that collective bargaining would not give women a fair deal; it was an (unsuccessful) attempt to circumvent the problem.

By tradition, trade union bargaining has rested on the idea that men are the main breadwinners, with a right to earn a 'family wage', and although this has seldom reflected the economic reality of most households, it has left women hanging on to the edge of trade unionism, as marginal and intermittent wage earners. Their additional talks of child rearing and housekeeping have never been considered the proper concern of trade unions — even though wages could not have been earned without them. And since women have had no alternative means of getting together and discussing their needs, they have come to accept the dominant view of what is important and reasonable, and what is not. At the same time, the dominant view remains a rather alien one — which helps to explain why women can present one set of attitudes on initial questioning (as in the MORI poll) and another after they have had a chance to talk things over with each other for a while.

In a pharmaceutical factory in the north-



The catalytic effect of getting together: voting for equal pay at Trico.



TUC march for equality, 1975: five years on, and still no voice in the unions.

for men to go off to union meetings, but they were outside working hours: 'As you know, a lot of women have to go home and cook the tea for their husbands. Or they can't get out because they've got to do their ironing and their washing.'

Some said their husbands would disapprove if they knew they were going to a pub for a union meeting. But most striking of all was the link between the prospect of 'responsibility', which deterred so many women from holding union office, and the role they played at home. It was not simply that women had less time: they were reluctant to add to the mental and emotional burden — of looking after other people's interests, having to remember to do things, always being on call — which they already carried with their domestic responsibilities. And they generally didn't recognise that the experience of dealing with a home and family could be a real asset to a union activist. One member said she thought women didn't make good shop stewards because they lost their tempers more quickly than men. 'I'm very short-tempered. I think I'd get more worked up than a man would.' Did she lose her temper at home with her children? 'No never! If they get on my nerves that much I do go away, calm down, then come back and start again.' On reflection she agreed that a woman could learn to cope with management just as she learned to cope with her kids: it was all down to experience.

Jane Stageman points out that the hierarchies of trade unions reflect the hierarchies in employment. Women are accustomed to being at the bottom of the pile, behaving deferentially towards men and expecting little or no advancement. This is bound to shape their aspirations and expectations in trade union affairs. Moreover, says Stageman:

The fact that the interest of men and women were generally different in every branch [in her study] was ensured by the sexual division of labour operating in . . . the sectors of employment where the unions were organising.

She found no evidence, however, 'of action being taken . . . to attempt to erode these occupational divisions between the sexes, despite the fact that women members showed most concern over this aspect of their employment position.'

THERE HAVE BEEN fierce arguments for at least two decades about what should be done to get women more involved in trade union activities. Should there be special conferences, special courses, special committees, special

west, I met the seven female stewards there. Like the women in Cathy's factory, they had never before met together as a group. They outnumbered the men in the factory by more than four to one, yet the men clearly ran the union. The women were paid no more than the lowest male grade, but they worked far more intensively than most of the men.

'Like at break time in the afternoon we've got ten minutes', one explained. 'The women are on the line and the buzzer goes. You run the length of the factory, up four flights of stairs, run right down to the canteen, get a drink, sit down, scald your tonsils and you've got to be back on the line before the buzzer blows. The men, they saunter in and saunter out. If we're late back, it's marked down on the lost time paper, but they're not as hard on the men. The management bends over backwards towards the men.'

Why was that? 'The men all stick together. We find a lot of women don't — they split up.'

Later, three male stewards joined the discussion. 'The reason men are strong in the union', said one, 'is because we get together. The women are tied on the line, they can't stop. There's plenty of time during the day when we can all get together. Quite often all the men are in one cloakroom.' Couldn't the women get together at lunch time? Apart from practical difficulties — they were on different shifts and (as one said) the married women had to go out shopping — it hadn't occurred to them: the men gathered in the cloakrooms during the day just as they gathered in the pubs at night.

IN ALL THE THINGS a women must do to be active and influential in her union (attending meetings and courses, knowing rules and procedures, speaking out in public, taking on the management), she must operate under terms and conditions laid down by men, whose experience and preoccupations may differ quite profoundly from her own. Thus, it is common for a woman to hang back, or give up altogether, while her male equivalent will have a go, bluff his way through, in what seems to him to be more familiar territory. Doris, a shop steward at the Merseyside glass factory, told me there'd never been a female convener there, and wouldn't ever be, as far as she could tell. 'I

don't know why. It's a big responsibility. It is for a feller, I know, but a woman, like, wouldn't say the things that a feller says.' What sort of things? 'You know, the way they talk to management, I think a woman would be a bit more timid.' Would *she* be timid? She thought so, but her workmates all disagreed. 'Once she gets going, no.' 'Doris speaks for us in our room when we have arguments and if someone's out of turn she'll say "shurrup and let me say what I want to say".' 'She can speak for herself and for us.' 'It's confidence, isn't it?'

In a study carried out by Jane Stageman of female trade unionists in the Hull area², 108 women from five branches (spanning the private and public sector, services and manufacturing) answered questions about the obstacles they perceived to their greater participation in union affairs. The questions were split up in an attempt to isolate 'personal', union-related and job-related factors: the first two categories elicited by far the largest response. Under the 'personal' heading, 44 per cent said 'feeling more confident' would encourage participation, and this was surpassed only by 'having a greater interest in union affairs' and 'fewer home responsibilities', both at 55 per cent. The latter response was echoed by many of the women I interviewed.

Julie, one of the stewards at the pharmaceutical factory, pointed out that it was all very well

Women in the unions

Figures in brackets show how many women there would be if they were represented according to their share of the membership.

Union	Membership			Executive Members		Full time Officials		TUC Delegates	
	Total	F	%F	Total	F	Total	F	Total	F
APEX (Professional, Executive, Clerical, Computer)	150,000	77,000	51%	15	1(8)	55	2(28)	15	4(8)
ASTMS (Technical, Managerial)	472,000	82,000	17%	24	2(4)	63	6(11)	30	3(5)
BIFU (Banking, Insurance, Finance)	132,000	64,000	49%	27	3(13)	41	6(20)	20	3(10)
GMWU (General & Municipal)	956,000	327,000	34%	40	0(14)	243	13(83)	73	3(25)
NALGO (Local Govt. Officers)	705,000	356,000	50%	70	14(35)	165	11(83)	72	15(36)
NUPE (Public Employees)	700,000	470,000	67%	26	8(17)	150	7(101)	32	10(22)
NUT (Teachers)	258,000	170,000	66%	44	4(29)	110	17(73)	36	7(24)
NUTGW (Tailor & Garment)	117,000	108,000	92%	15	1(14)	47	9(43)	17	6(16)
TGWU (Transport & General)	2,070,000	330,000	16%	39	0(6)	600	6(96)	85	6(14)
USDAW (Shop, Distributive, Allied)	462,000	281,000	63%	16	3(10)	162	13(102)	38	8(24)
TOTALS	6,022,000	2,265,000	38%	316	36(150)	1,636	90(640)	418	65(174)

*All figures are approximate.

seats? Or would these amount to tokenism; would they ghettoise women's issues; would they insult women by treating them as something other than exact equals of men? When I first attended the annual TUC women's conference in 1977, I witnessed its (last) narrow escape from abolition: certain unions were arguing that the Sex Discrimination Act had heralded a new era of equality which made a separate conference at best superfluous, at worst a dangerous diversion. But they lost, and since then more and more unions have been experimenting with special measures of various kinds.

The white collar engineers' union TASS appointed a national women's organiser as early as 1974; it also has women's sub-committees at national and divisional levels, each with a special seat on its parent body; and it runs an annual weekend women's school. The National Union of Public Employees has created five seats for women on its national executive, acknowledging that women's under-representation has nothing 'to do with "women's nature" or lack of interest in the affairs of NUPE [but] . . . with the position of women in the wider society and at work.' The local government officers' union NALGO has a network of equal opportunities committees and a regular equal opportunities bulletin, while (somewhat contradictorily) refusing to send delegates to the TUC women's conference. Two other white collar unions, APEX and ASTMS have similar arrangements for national and regional committees; and the two largest blue-collar unions, the Transport and General and the GMWU, have recently resolved to set up equal rights committees in their regions.

Next year the TUC women's advisory committee will have eight instead of five of its members elected by the women's conference (the rest are appointed by the General Council); and the General Council will increase its women's section from two to five seats (instead of seven, as requested by the TUC women's conference). Last year, Congress endorsed a 10-point charter, *Equality for Women within Trade Unions*, urging unions to take positive steps to encourage women's participation. It recommends, where appropriate, women's seats on national and local bodies, special advisory committees, paid time off for union meetings in working hours, child care arrangements for meetings, special encouragement for women to attend union training, and non-sexist union publications.

Perhaps the most important development in the last two or three years has been the recognition by many unions that the problem (of women's powerlessness) is a long-term one: we are not poised on the brink of true equality, we are just starting to climb the hill towards it. My own union, the NUJ, set up an Equality Working Party in 1975, with a double brief to promote equality in journalism and fight sexism in the media. In subsequent years vigorous efforts were made to disband it — and while some of its opponents were driven simply by a distaste for equality, others sincerely believed that *the job was nearly done*. After five years, the Working Party seems at last to be convincing members that male dominance is so deeply entrenched that it will take many decades to eradicate it; and that more, not fewer, special measures are needed to speed the process. This pattern is apparently being repeated in other unions — as the truth (unpalatable to some) begins to

emerge that the more unions do to encourage women, the more conscious women will become of their potential, and the more they will demand.

IT IS HARD to assess the results so far of the various measures unions have adopted, although broad lessons can be drawn from them. Equality working parties and women's advisory committees can meet for years on end, campaigning hard and producing first-rate literature, yet fail to get their message through to the bulk of the membership. Communication is likely to be especially poor if the union is large, with members scattered around small workplaces and with no centralised bargaining structure. When I met two groups of female GMWU members in the north of England, I asked them three questions: Did their union have a national officer with special responsibility for women? Did their region have an equal rights officer? Had there recently been an equal rights conference in their area? In each case, all of them answered with an emphatic — and inaccurate — 'NO'. But it would be unfair to focus on the difficulties of the GMWU, which are no greater than average. A group of NUPE women in the south-east could not tell me the names of any of their female national executive members.

Jane Stageman confirms that poor communication is a major obstacle to women's participation: 62 per cent of the members she questioned thought women would be encouraged if union matters were 'made easier to understand'; and 52 per cent thought it would help if more information were available about how their unions worked. In her paper, *Women in ASTMS*, Marjorie Harrison points to the crucial role of branch secretaries. The ASTMS National Women's Advisory Committee had been worried by the lack of response to a letter sent out to members, and so arranged a follow-up:

It was discovered that some Secretaries were not passing on the information at all and others, instead of reading from the letter (which was deliberately low key) were mentioning almost in passing that 'two women's libbers want to come and talk to you about women's lib', which got the reaction it was geared to receive — rejection.

Harrison, herself an activist in ASTMS, studied the impact of her union's women's advisory committee and concluded that its greatest measurable achievements were in helping to preserve abortion rights, and other 'social issues' such as the campaign for child benefit. On industrial matters such as pay and maternity leave, its impact had been minimal, because it had no direct links with the officials responsible for negotiations. The ASTMS experience is typical of many unions. A strong distinction remains between 'women's issues' and industrial matters; special measures adopted so far have failed to increase women's involvement in the latter sphere, where men remain firmly in control. This suggests some new strategies will have to be devised.

There are few signs that special women's committees are increasing the level of female representation on unions' national and regional bodies. (They may in the long-term, but it is impossible to judge.) After years of campaigning for equality in the NUJ, I paid my first visit to our national executive committee this summer, to discuss an item on the agenda. It was not a pretty sight: a large room, a horseshoe arrangement of tables and a solid line of male faces, broken only by a

solitary female at the far end — the minutes secretary. Of course I had known there were no women members, but as a spectacle it had a surprisingly powerful effect. (Should there be regular sightseeing visits for all women in the NUJ?)

So far, my union has rejected the idea of reserved seats for women (on 'tokenism' grounds), but I am not convinced. NUPE's experiment is said to have encouraged the election of three additional women on to its executive. On the other hand, there is evidence that in NUPE links are weak between the women who hold special seats on the executive on the one hand, and the ordinary female members and the business of policy-making on women's issues on the other. These links might be strengthened if the women on the executive were also representatives of a network of national and regional women's committee. (So far NUPE has no such network.)

THERE IS no doubt that forceful individuals can have a big impact on female awareness and solidarity. Marjorie Harrison claims that one particular woman was able to swing the entire ASTMS executive from opposing to supporting the setting-up of a woman's advisory committee. Marjorie Mayo, who has studied the union involvement of home helps and meals-on-wheels workers in the London borough of Tower Hamlets⁴, concludes that attendance at union meetings 'was considerably better where there was an active shop steward on the premises to keep members informed and call sectional meetings where necessary'. And at London's Heathrow Hotel, an ebullient Spanish woman, Marisa Casares-Roach, has changed the face of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Marisa, a former waitress and swimming pool attendant, joined the union five years ago and is now the convenor, with 360 members, half of whom are women. From being in a minority of one, she has reached the point where there are nine female and three male stewards (and, as she points out, the organisation couldn't have survived if she hadn't retained the support of all her members). 'Women make better shop stewards', she says. 'They are more inclined to understand people's problems, they can *sense* things. And they have more patience, too.' Over the years she has kept an eye out for potential stewards, then coaxed each one painstakingly into the job. 'Of course they don't think they can do it at first. You just have to show them they can, and stay with them. But you couldn't rely on a man to do that.'

Marisa sets great store by union training courses, on the ground that knowledge is sure to bring confidence, and she takes the view that child care facilities should be provided at all of them (she has two young children). Through the training courses, she also builds contacts with female activists in other parts of the country, and keeps in touch by telephone afterwards. Her achievements suggest how much could be done if unions appointed more full-time female organisers. And the value of support networks — formal and informal — cannot be underestimated, in view of the extraordinary pressures to which female activists are exposed.

Because of their rarity, women whose heads emerge above the crowd are swiftly burdened with responsibility; and they often have extra commitments (to women's meetings as well as to their families), on top of all their regular

Men and women at work: where views differ

IN ORDER TO explore the attitudes of men and women at work, the *New Statesman* commissioned a special survey from Market & Opinion Research International. We were interested to discover if, and to what extent, men and women differed in their views on their pay, their unions, and the role of working women.

MORI found that women are just as likely as men to consider themselves fairly paid (see table one), even though men are, on average, paid 36 per cent more than women. Indeed in MORI's survey, the group that felt most strongly that it was fairly paid consisted of women trade union members; as many as 82 per cent of them said they were fairly paid.

One third of MORI's sample said they would prefer to work shorter hours than have a substantial pay rise; half disagreed. Once again there was little difference between the responses

of men and women. A clear majority of workers under 45 would prefer more money to shorter hours; but workers over 45 are evenly divided.

A clear difference between male and female attitudes emerged in response to the proposition that where jobs are scarce, married women should be discouraged from working. Women disagreed by a margin of two-to-one. More men disagreed, too; but the margin was a slender eight per cent. On closer analysis, it emerges that women in all social classes hold similar views on this; but among men, a clear majority of white-collar workers disagree with the notion of discouraging women working, while blue-collar workers are evenly divided.

To examine why women play a disproportionately small role in unions, MORI tested two hypotheses: that women are more likely to feel they would have problems at home if they were more active in their unions; and that both men and women prefer male shop stewards. There is little evidence to support the first idea (see table two), but some to support the second: one-third of both men and women union members agree that men make better shop stewards.

Finally MORI asked trade union members in its sample to identify which characteristics, out of a list of ten items, apply to their own union. Table three shows the results.

The most notable finding is that only 11 per cent of union members say their own union is controlled by extremists and militants — a lower figure than for any other item on the list. This compares with the general belief of 55 per cent of union members that 'most unions today are controlled by a few extremists', recorded in a recent

2			
(Trade Union members)			
Q. Do you agree or disagree that...			
	All	Men	Women
I'd have problems at home if I were more active in the union			
Agree	27	26	29
Disagree	59	61	55
Men make better shop stewards than women do			
Agree	33	34	32
Disagree	36	33	45

MORI poll for the *Sunday Times*. It seems that union members think other unions are led by extremists...

Male unionists seem to feel more in touch than female unionists with what their union is doing, and to feel that the union 'encourages people like me to get involved'. On the other hand, men are twice as likely as women to feel their union is too involved in politics.

Only one-third of women unionists think their union fights hard for equality between men and women; but this seems to reflect the fact that

unions are not generally expected to get involved in wider social or family issues. Only 19 per cent of women unionists think their union should do more to meet the needs of workers with young children.

Overall, women are just as satisfied as men that their union is 'good at looking after the interests of people like me'. Indeed, despite the critical attitude of many unionists towards the union movement as a whole — consistently reported in polls over the years — most union members seem to have a favourable impression of their own union. The five most widely selected items on MORI's list were all positive, while the three least widely selected were negative.

The bogey-image of unions that is sometimes conjured up may accord with the general attitudes of union members; but it does not seem to accord with their immediate experiences.

NOTE: MORI conducted its survey among 1041 working men and women, aged 18 and over, including 481 trade union members, at 153 sampling points throughout Great Britain. The fieldwork was done between August 28 and September 1, using an interlocking quota sample.

1			
(All workers)			
(figures in percentages)			
Q. Do you agree or disagree that...			
	All	Men	Women
On balance, I am paid fairly for the work I do			
Agree	72	71	73
Disagree	20	21	18
I'd rather work shorter hours than have a substantial pay rise			
Agree	34	33	34
Disagree	49	50	47
Where jobs are scarce, married women should be discouraged from working			
Agree	34	38	28
Disagree	50	46	56

3			
(Trade Union members)			
Q. Which of these applies to your union?			
	All	Men	Women
(figures in percentages)			
Would fight hard to protect my job if it were threatened	52	54	48
Tries to keep its members in touch with what the union is doing	43	46	32
Good at looking after the interests of people like me	39	39	40
Usually holds meetings at times and places that are easy for me to attend	33	34	29
Fights hard for equality between men and women at work	31	30	33
Union meetings are usually boring	25	27	18
Encourages people like me to get involved	25	27	19
Too involved in politics and not enough in advancing its members interests	22	25	12
Should to more to meet the needs of workers with young children	16	15	19
Controlled by extremists and militants	11	12	7

union duties. The higher up the ladder they go, the more isolated they become and the tougher it gets to prove they can do the job. It is common for women who hold senior office to find they have no more time for their equal rights or women's advisory committees. Some who get near the top, having fought for most of their lives to 'make it' on men's terms, get comfy as token women and lose sight of their sisters' need for a helping hand. Some hold on to their commitment, but are driven in their isolation to degrees of paranoia and over-caution. These problems will only diminish if the support networks grow stronger; if more women emerge in senior positions; and if union hierarchies keep in much closer touch with the grass roots.

FOR THE WOMEN who are just setting out, recent trade union experiments with various forms of 'positive action' suggest that two measures in particular could have a profound effect. The first is to ensure that women's domestic responsibilities don't stop them getting to union meetings. The most effective way is to negotiate work-time meetings, and Jane Stageman's study confirms that more women see this as a spur to activism than anything else. But it wouldn't suit all workplaces and, where it doesn't, it is essential to provide for child care — either by laying on a creche, or by arranging baby-sitting payments.

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The second measure — which promises to be the most catalytic — is to give women plenty of opportunity to meet together *as women*. This is a difficult point to argue (outside feminist circles), because the effect really has to be witnessed to be appreciated. I know that many who attend the TUC women's conference find it of immeasurable value just to be in a room with other women, discussing issues of special concern to them without — as it were — looking over their shoulders. There is always a remarkable degree of unanimity (the women *know* what they want, they just haven't got the power to achieve it); and there is often a faint buzz of euphoria, because it is such a rare experience for women to meet together in those numbers.

I recently visited a NUPE weekend school, arriving on Sunday afternoon after 25 women — nurses, caterers, cleaners, a road sweeper, a gardener and others — had been together for 36 hours. It had been a novel occasion for all of them and they, too, were euphoric — even though they had been up half the night boozing and bopping and playing silly games, and they had terrible hangovers. They'd spent the daytime learning how to negotiate and discussing their common and separate experiences. Now they said they wanted more courses like this one; and they wanted to see each other again. What had they learned that was new? 'Not new, exactly,' said one. 'It's things I've

had in my head all the time, but I thought it was just me!' 'We couldn't have spoken freely if men had been here', another said. 'We need a few more of these, and then we could go on a mixed course. We've got to get ourselves more educated — we're only on the edge.'

Jenny Owen has started running TUC courses for women in the Manchester and Liverpool areas. 'It works every time', she told me. 'They all say it makes such a difference to have just women on their own, and at the end of two days they're high on it.' It is that sense of solidarity which women need to nurture, and carry with them into the heart of trade union affairs.

In the end, it is not a question of *which* measure should be adopted, because they are all necessary. Women need reserved seats, advisory committees, special conferences, and mixed as well as single-sex training courses. And when they finally begin to make their presence felt, if the trade union movement is not to be torn apart, men will need to make some considerable room for them.

1. *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, Sarah Boston, Davis-Poynter, London 1980.
2. *Women in Trade Unions*, Jane Stageman, Industrial Studies Unit, Hull University, 1980.
3. *Women in ASTMS*, Marjorie Harrison, School of Industrial and Business Studies, Warwick University, 1980.
4. *Survey of 74 female manual workers in Tower Hamlets*, Marjorie Mayo, Polytechnic of Central London, 1980.

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Although the size and stability of the Pru have been widely recognised, some people still regard it as somewhat old-fashioned, mainly involved in door-to-door selling. Nothing of course could be further from the truth.

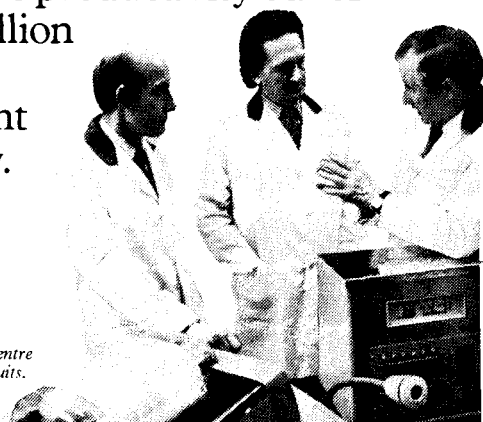


In the Prudential computer complex.

Financial journalist and Sunday Express City Editor Kenneth Fleet has been reporting on the Prudential's modern role, and on the many facets of the Company, which plays a sizeable part in the economy of the country.

In conversation with Sir Hector Laing, in the futuristic control centre of

United Biscuits, Fleet learned how the 'Pru' backs productivity out of its '£3 million a day' investment capability.



At the control centre of United Biscuits.

In another 1990's setting, which contrasted dramatically with the Company's familiar Victorian gothic facade, he discovered from John Powel Prudential Management Services how modern computer facility improves customer service.

At a 'boardroom table' which was, in fact, a giant replica of the world's most



Board meeting at Waddington's.



you don't know

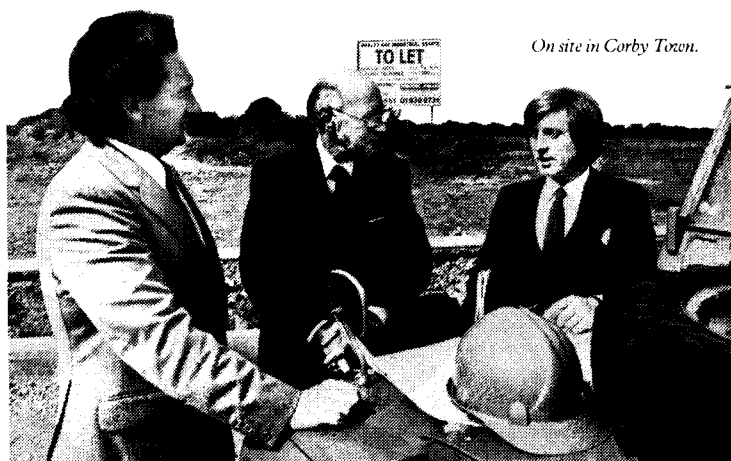
nous board game, Fleet learned that addington's are among a number of ell-known companies who capitalise the Prudential's pension-fund perience. And, in case anyone was tting the impression the Prudential was big business, he journeyed to a farm in otland to see how the Prudential 1980 ency network *works* at the grassroots.



At the grassroots in Scotland.

Property development often gets a d press, but, on a visit to the steel town Corby, Fleet found the Prudential's llingness to invest in new factory units d helped to boost confidence in the wn's future. And, talking of futures, he cently turned the spotlight on Prudential nsion plans for the self-employed, when interviewed Jack Watling and his ughter, Debbie, on stage.

New Statesman 7 November 1980



On site in Corby Town.

The Prudential's annual report and a folder of these advertisements are available from the Publicity Department, Prudential Assurance Company Limited, 142 Holborn Bars, London EC1N 2NH.

Prudential

You don't know the half of it.



On stage with the Watlings.

The subversive admirer of Richard Nixon

OUTSIDE SOUTH KOREA, Kim Dae Jung would fit happily into the centre-right of politics. Left-wingers proposing to rally round him are startled to find that he really does want America's 40,000 troops to stay in place, and that he genuinely does view the Communist North as a mighty threat. When I first met him, in 1972, I saw among the photographs festooning his room pictures of himself and his wife with Richard and Pat Nixon: not many 'subversives' go to the gallows leaving that kind of memorabilia behind.

The trouble with Kim, from the viewpoint of the generals who rule South Korea, is that he poses as much of a threat to their power as do the North Korean tanks stationed just across the peninsula's demilitarised zone. By having him sentenced to death — on charges of plotting to overthrow the government by violence — General Chun Doo Hwan, South Korea's military strongman, has left himself in an awkward dilemma. If he chooses to approve the execution, as recommended by the military court, Chun may touch off a furore in the two countries on which South Korea relies for survival, Japan and the United States. If, however, the sentence were commuted to life imprisonment, Kim would remain a potent leader for the millions of Koreans who would almost certainly elect him president in any free election. The deciding factor has been the result of American presidential election: a Reagan victory makes Kim's death practically inevitable, while Carter, for all the obvious weakness of his 'human rights' policy, might still have been ticklish about arms shipments if Kim were to go to the gallows.

The train of events leading to Kim's present incarceration began with the assassination of President Park on 26 October 1979. Some observers felt that Park's death might, at last, provide the chance for the emergence of a 'real' opposition, probably led by Kim Dae Jung. This would, however, depend on whether the government revised the constitution to provide for a direct election to the presidency — and any hopes of such a move were soon extinguished when Chun Doo Hwan, then a major-general in charge of army security, staged his own little *coup* on 12 December 1979. Chun arrested General Chung Seung Hwa, who had appeared to be establishing himself as Park's successor, and then settled down to spend the next few months pursuing all possible political foes and annihilating them.

Despite this unpromising atmosphere, Kim Dae Jung continued to gather support and to demand a timetable for constitutional revision. The Americans made the same demand, in a rather muted voice, through their ambassador William Gleysteen. As so often in US foreign policy, however, America cancelled out its superficially good intentions by failing actually to do anything; Gleysteen was quite unable to back up his pleas for 'liberalisation' with any kind of threat to reduce the number of American troops or to cut off arms sales, which average several hundred million dollars a year. He was also considerably hampered by the US military commander, General John Wickham, a Reagan enthusiast whose only interest was in military security.



Kim Dae Jung, outside the courtroom during his trial

The gutlessness of the American establishment was never so apparent as when the riots against General Chun broke out on campuses throughout the country in mid-May this year. The students refrained from violence, by and large, while repeating their demands for the ousting of Chun and the revision of the constitution. American diplomats, as usual, were giving background briefings about the need for 'democratic progress', but it was plain that there would be no such progress unless the US spelled out to the martial law command the consequences of further delay. Instead General Wickham, a man wholly unattuned to political issues, decided that General Chun should have *carte blanche* to suppress any political threats to what Wickham, the Pentagon and the National Security Council regarded as stability.

AS SOON AS he realised that the United States would do nothing to stop him, all that Chun needed was a pretext for rounding up all his critics and framing them. The students played straight into his hands by rampaging through the streets of Seoul. Kim Dae Jung himself urged them to desist, but on 17 May Kim and his allies were arrested. The government soon issued its official account of 'the intent and target of Kim Dae Jung', which alleged that Kim had seen Park's assassination as 'a golden opportunity to push himself into power' and 'fancied himself as the new political star, making self-styled proposals to save the nation, organising his followers and attracting domestic and international attention through ingenious popularity tactics.'

The rest of the government version was an attempt to justify the capital charges of sedition and conspiracy, for which Kim was duly convicted on 17 September, four months to the day after his arrest. Kim's 'organisational manoeuvring', according to the government, had 'focused on creating a decisive opportunity to take over the government in one fell swoop by deepening the people's mistrust of the government and agitating a revolutionary contingency.'

Oddly, however, the initial charges neglected to mention the role that Kim was later accused of having played in the revolt that broke out, the week after his arrest, in the south-western city of Kwangju, near his birthplace in Mokpo. It was not until a month or

two later that the prosecutors implicated him in the Kwangju 'insurrection', claiming that he had poured funds into the coffers of the student rebels who had held out for a week before government forces smashed them, at a cost of hundreds of lives. The government seems to have decided eventually to portray Kim as the leader of all political disaffection, regardless of the absurdity of maintaining that he had led the revolt from prison.

It was during the rebellion in Kwangju that the United States put on its worst show of diplomatic cowardice. Without the approval of the State Department, General Wickham formally authorised the 'release' of Korean forces just south of the demilitarised zone so that they could back up the reinforcements already positioned around Kwangju. Citizens too frightened to criticise the Chun regime cite Wickham's collaboration with Chun as evidence of American desire to join in the destruction of serious opposition in Korea. Ambassador Gleysteen, for all his professed desire to get to know opposition leaders (he had self-consciously lunched with them from time to time), made it clear that he too was in favour of sending in troops from the demilitarised zone, lest the North should 'take advantage' of problems in the South.

THE AMERICANS may not be greatly bothered about the state of democracy in South Korea, but Seoul's other main props — the Japanese — are watching closely. In August 1973 Kim Dae Jung was kidnapped from his place of exile, Tokyo's Grand Palace Hotel, by agents of the Korean CIA; since then his ordeals have been front-page news in the Japanese press. The abduction was taken as an affront to national sovereignty, and relations between the two countries have been periodically rocky ever since, even though Japan is by far South Korea's largest trading partner and source of foreign investment.

The immediate insult of Kim's kidnapping was partly softened by a pledge from Korea's then prime minister that Kim would not be prosecuted for any 'offence' committed while he was in Japan. Japanese ire has now been rekindled by the flagrant disregarding of this promise: a central allegation in the recent case against Kim was that he had 'a leading role in the establishment of the Hammintong, or National Congress for the Restoration of

Contd on page 16

Does the Advertising Standards Authority exist to protect the consumer or the advertising industry?

The job of the Advertising Standards Authority is to protect the public from unacceptable advertisements in the press, on posters, in print and in the cinema.

It was set up by the advertising industry.

Because the A.S.A. is not a government body and, therefore, has no legal jurisdiction, people are sometimes sceptical about its effectiveness.

Is it possible for the A.S.A. to have proper control over advertising?

How can it be objective about advertising if it was set up by the industry?

The A.S.A. works independently of the advertising industry.

Although it is financed by the advertising industry, it works entirely independently.

The Chairman, Lord McGregor, and most of his Council, work outside the industry. In fact, it was agreed when the A.S.A. was first set up, that at least half of the Council must have no connection with advertising at all. And, in practice, less than one third does.

For instance, the A.S.A. has a Welsh industrialist, a radio producer and a Methodist Minister on the Council.

Each person is invited to serve on the Council because he or she can offer unbiased judgement on advertisements which come under scrutiny. And no-one serves as the voice of any particular interest.

Working under the Council is a full-time Secretariat.

How thorough is the A.S.A. in checking advertising generally?

It uses a set of rules, the British Code of Advertising Practice, which covers not only matters such as offensiveness and truthfulness, but also the particular problems which arise from advertising certain products such as cigarettes and alcohol. Advertisers, agencies and the media have agreed to observe the spirit of the Code as well as the letter.

What does the A.S.A. do about unacceptable advertising?

Firstly, the advertiser is asked to amend or withdraw the offending advertisement from the media.

If he fails to do so immediately, the media owners are informed. They will not make space available in a publication, on a poster site or in the cinema for any advertisement which the A.S.A. has ruled to contravene the British Code of Advertising Practice.

Also, every month, the cases which have been dealt with are published in a report for everyone to see.

This system happens to be not only very effective, but is also quick and inexpensive.

How does the A.S.A. decide which advertisements are unacceptable?

The volume of advertising which runs in this country makes it impossible for the A.S.A. to vet every individual advertisement before it is published.

One way it keeps a thorough check on advertising is to respond to consumers' complaints.

Any complaint which is sent in to the A.S.A. from a member of the public is considered carefully. If there is a case to answer, a full investigation is made. (By the way, complaints about T.V. and radio advertising are dealt with by the I.B.A.)

To make doubly sure that the system is working and that advertisers and agencies are adhering to the Code, the A.S.A. monitors a wide range of advertisements on a continuous basis. It pays particular attention to areas of current concern such as advertising directed at children. Also, to make sure that the Council members and the Code are up-to-date with current opinion, the A.S.A. carries out research from time to time.

So, who does the A.S.A. protect?

The A.S.A. works very effectively to protect the consumer. But, of course, keeping advertising standards high works for the good of the advertising industry too.

Advertisers, agencies and the media know that it is in their interest to make sure the A.S.A. is working.

And it does, as any advertiser who has come up against us, knows only too well.

If you would like to know more about the way the A.S.A. works, please write to us at the address below.

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Europe's Left opposition

JOHN PALMER argues a socialist case against a 'Quit the EEC' policy.

THE LABOUR PARTY conference decision for British withdrawal from the Common Market poses problems for the left which have not even begun to be tackled yet. The Left's indifference and boredom towards the EEC has left the political running to the Labour Party nationalists (of the Right, 'Left' and Centre) and, particularly in the past year, to a stridently xenophobic Margaret Thatcher.

The internationalist Left has always found it difficult to pick its way between the — now much diminished — forces of the European federal state — on the one hand — and the champions of Little England or Commonwealth nostalgia on the other. But politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum, and if the Left does not work out a position of its own it will be outflanked by the Right — whether 'Europeanist' or nationalist.

It is clear that the campaign to sell Common Market membership to the British was a major con. Few political slogans now ring with more ironic bitterness than the pro-EEC poster put out during the referendum which said:

Let's have jobs for the boys, for ALL the boys — the UK in the European Community is the best guarantee of full employment.

Few, if any, of the predicted positive 'dynamic effects' on the British economy have materialised. Free trade with the rest of the EEC has accelerated Britain's industrial decline. In retrospect it can be seen that the gap between British and continental European productivity was simply too great to permit reasonable equilibrium in foreign trade or the flow of investment capital.

In addition, the price the UK has paid for the privilege of free trade has been very much higher than was foreseen at the time. Facts about the high cost of the Common Agricultural Policy are now established beyond question. Even in 1975 few people in the pro-EEC camp pretended there was much to be said for the CAP but they tipped the wink that Britain had received binding assurances (above all from the West Germans) that it would be reformed. It has not been reformed and its demise cannot be guaranteed, especially if the governments of the EEC rat on pledges not to increase the limit on EEC Budget revenues.

Thus far the case of the Labour anti-marketeers is faultless. However they have a tendency, not justified by the facts, to suggest that it is the EEC institutions — above all the Commission — which are the obstacle to reform. That is not so. It is the national governments — sometimes, it must be said, running in front of their parliamentary opinion — which have obstructed and undermined efforts to change the most obnoxious features of the EEC's finances.

THE LABOUR ANTI-MARKETEERS can be divided into two camps. The first — embracing Peter Shore, John Silkin and Michael Foot — are nationalists, favour reform of the EEC and are enthusiasts for the Westminster Parliament's prerogatives. But the hard left,

including many who give tactical or other support to Tony Benn, tend to be internationalists (in theory at least), to want a comprehensive reorganisation of British and indeed European society and to be aware of the limits imposed on national parliamentary power in the capitalist state.

It is far from clear why the reformers want to leave the market completely since most of their objectives can be achieved as easily inside as outside. The CAP will have to be reformed, as it is running out of money. Even a Tory government's attempts to extend its life would have to be endorsed by parliament in Westminster. And even if such a tough stand put the temporary limit on Britain's contribution to the budget at risk, the remedy again lies with London. The EEC has no sanction it can impose against Britain if it simply refuses to pay over part of its gross contributions from VAT, customs duties or agricultural levies.

On the question of the massive trade deficit Britain has with the EEC, a protectionist-minded government in London would be able to employ the EEC's own international trade practices against EEC imports into Britain: these practices, such as the Multi-Fibre Arrangement or the D'Avignon steel plan — are among the most protectionist in the world.

Finally, a Labour government could restore a large measure of 'sovereignty' on EEC matters to Westminster by the simple expedient of offering a select committee on Common Market matters the power to mandate government ministers, in advance, on decisions; this is already done in Denmark.

In sum, virtually everything the Labour middle-of-the-roadsers want to do can be done from within. Some such changes are already visible and will increase when Greece, Por-

tugal and Spain join the Community. No-one believes that there is any going back to the cosy relationship with former Commonwealth countries or EFTA. Even Mr Shore favours 'political co-operation' with the rest of the EEC. In effect, the contenders for the PLP leadership offer not the option of leftwing neutralism, but still closer links with the United States.

For the hard left all of this can hardly settle the argument. A socialist government in Britain would win the enmity of many EEC governments and institutions; in that sense withdrawal might be the necessary consequence of a socialist transformation, but it can hardly precede it. The left might reflect that the Commission is, at present, the residual centre of social democratic influence in a Europe increasingly dominated by right wing monetarist governments. But if the hard left comes to a 'quit the market' conclusion, what is the alternative? Can there be any credibility in a policy of socialism in one bankrupt country when it is quite clear there is no basis even for capitalism in one country in today's conditions?

At the moment even the elementary task of organising a Europe wide resistance to slump, militarism, racism and the oppressive state sounds hopelessly grandiose — never mind the socialist transformation of society — given the way the left has turned its back on even the most elementary attempts to mount a Europe-wide opposition movement. Why for instance does the British Left not organise a Europe wide campaign against youth unemployment — and demand that Labour members of the Strasbourg parliament do something useful in trying to co-ordinate with the Left and trades unions in other EEC countries? Why not organise EEC-wide resistance to the growing fascist movement or give a real push to the anti-nuclear campaign? Such steps would make it easier for British workers to enlist the support of their European brothers and sisters when it came to action over imports which threaten jobs.

Korean execution

Contd from p.14

Democracy and Promotion of Unification of Korea, on 6 July 1973' — while he was in Tokyo.

It was claimed that Kim, through the Ham-mintong, had supported withdrawal of US troops and a 'north-south confederation', even though in numerous interviews and speeches Kim has welcomed American military support against the North. At the trial itself Kim said that he 'did not want the United States to pull its troops out of Korea and that he did not want to regard as friends those who engaged in anti-state, rather than anti-government activities.' Military censors assiduously cut out this and similar references to his position, just as they deleted testimony about how he was stripped naked and interrogated day after day in his cell.

Japanese economic domination of much Korean business and industry is a legacy of the days of glory and empire. Park Chung Hee was educated at the Japanese military academy and commissioned as a lieutenant in the Japanese army. Korean interrogators are said to have learnt some of the more advanced forms of torture from the Japanese. The harsh condemnation of Kim's sentence voiced by Japan's leaders is thus, to a considerable ex-

tent, attributable to a sort of wounded imperialist pride, an annoyance that Korea has taken such a serious step without troubling about the feelings of its former masters.

Despite the trumpetings from Tokyo, the Japanese would now like to rationalise their way out of strong measures that might upset the East Asian power balance. Like the Americans, they fear a North Korean attack that could expand the Soviet Union's empire; nor do they seriously wish to jeopardise their trade and investment. Moreover, if the Americans do nothing (as seems likely), what can the Japanese do on their own with 33,000 American troops on their soil? With arguments such as this the Japanese may try to pass the blame on to the United States, which, they will argue, could easily intimidate Chun by announcing withdrawal of a few thousand troops, or by refusing to send spare parts.

In October General Chun safely managed the passage of a new constitution banning political debate or real opposition and providing for indirect election to the presidency. But unrest still simmers. If Kim is saved it will not be because of the US or Japan but because of the continued threat of another revolution. If Kim dies, the execution may not — as Chun hopes — serve to *encourager les autres*; it could instead spark an intensification of the struggle for some semblance of democracy in South Korea.



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The tactics of dissuasion



Camera Press

Switzerland's militia army, despite some dissident voices, retains a considerable and broad-based support.

Protagonists in the defence debate often imply that surrender is the only alternative to nuclear deterrence. Is this true? Here GENERAL FRANK SEETHALER explains the Swiss military system, founded tactically upon a non-nuclear militia army integrated into the general population. This is the basis of the Swiss 'strategy of dissuasion', subtly different from NATO's 'possessive deterrents.' Rather than purporting to make all war unthinkable, it concentrates on suggesting that any specific aggression will be unworthwhile when measured against the high cost of initial conquest and the continued cost of occupation.

IN THIS ARTICLE it is not the strategic-dissuasive role of the armed forces that we propose to consider. Rather it is: how, if dissuasion fails, do they intend fighting, and with what chance of success?

The operative conception of the Swiss forces is defensive. Given the limitations imposed by territory, topography and demography, the army has a confined field of options within which to deploy its forces for battle.

At the tactical level, defensive action finds its true expression in a *dynamic defence of territory*. The large number of available infantry units (some 40 per cent of total manpower) hold key positions and vital zones. Mechanized units, in strength proportionate to the importance of the zone to be held, carry out *counterstrokes*.

In built-up, wooded or mountainous regions, offensive action by infantry — raids, or night counter-attacks — is also anticipated. Towed, mechanized and fortress artillery, as well as air power, support the static troops and the mobile formations. But there is no intention to wage wide-area offensive air warfare.

The task of the air force is interception, local air superiority and ground support: in other words, it operates always in co-operation with ground forces.

All troops, not just specialised engineers, are expected to be capable of setting-up terrain fortifications: the mainstay of those troops deployed in key operative zones have nuclear blast-proof shelters, and all troops are positioned in reinforced structures *before* any fighting starts. But it is the task of combat

engineering units to maintain their own freedom of movement.

WHAT IS to be expected of warfare conceived in this way, which from the viewpoint of the Great Powers may even be anachronistic? Does it constitute a reasonable response to the modern threat of aggression based on heavy firepower? And how on earth should nuclear threat be countered?

The conception has, undoubtedly, its weaknesses. Yet a number of valid points, and advantages over the potential aggressor, are evident.

An army composed chiefly of unarmoured units needs time to establish readiness — even though the Swiss forces, due to decentralization and detailed preparation, are likely to mobilize in record time. Would sufficient time be available under all conditions?

A mechanized aggressor could not just move into Swiss territory. The basic transport system can be disrupted in many places by destruction of tunnels and viaducts: countless natural obstacles and built-up areas can inhibit the momentum of mechanised attack — and considerations arise similar to those underlying the Finnish 'Motti tactic' in the 1939-40 Winter War against the USSR.¹

On this territory, advantageous to the defender but adverse to the aggressor, Switzerland's 12 divisions and 17 independent combat brigades are deployed in a 'chessboard' pattern. This not only results in a troop density unknown anywhere else in Europe — but also in a unique depth, which ranges, for instance, from Lake Geneva to the Lake of Constance.

Defensive battles, throughout the entire ter-

ritory, which will repeat themselves at every key position, are designed to consume the strength of the adversary. The anticipated *thrust tactic* on the part of an aggressor is not met by the Swiss with a comparable type of warfare — as would be the case, for instance, in the mobile defence concept. 'Slowdown', 'defend' and 'counter-action' are the concepts to be applied.

There are certain basic rules to be observed:

- *Delaying the presentation of targets through exploitation of natural obstacles and setting-up of artificial ones;

- *Remaining unnoticed till the moment of opening fire, and ensuring high first-shot hit probability;

- *Turning hard targets into soft ones by forcing the enemy to use unarmoured engineering troops and dismounted infantry to clear obstacles;

- *Exploiting the channelling effect of topography for surprise attacks against the depth of the enemy's flanks;

- *Preparing anticipated fire engagements and counterstrokes in advance;

- *Deploying mobile forces and reserves on the strength of reliable intelligence.

Even though an aggressor may bring in additional divisions by air, the effective relation of forces will not be altered significantly: airborne attack in the depth of the defence positions will meet combat-ready troops in the rear-defence zone of the 'chessboard'.

SUCH GENERALLY OPTIMISTIC considerations are clouded by certain limitations of weapon technology and psychology.

The majority of Swiss anti-tank weapons are obsolete, and their armour-piercing power no longer satisfactory. Re-equipment of tank units is slow, and riddled with engineering problems. The remarkable improvement in combat efficiency offered by Dragon anti-tank guided weapons (with a company assigned to each infantry battalion and mechanised unit) does not fully solve the problem of inadequate armour-piercing power.

As regards equipment, the Swiss forces will always remain near the level of the lowest politically-justifiable limits. Because of the large size of the army and the relatively high cost of domestic production, reserves are limited and the trend to obsolescence is acute. Given that a strategy of attrition is to be forced upon the enemy, it is not sufficiently taken into account that one's own equipment is also subject to attrition — even if the rate of losses may be relatively low.

Operationally and psychologically, the question arises whether that part of the forces which has to fight from field positions can survive the fire preceding the attack. Two world wars, and experience gathered in more recent conflicts, seem to answer in the affirmative. Yet it remains to be seen whether the psychological resistance of today's soldier may be assessed as equal to that of, say, a representative of the generation that lived through the firestorms of 1914-18. No valid answer is possible. Yet personal experience in 40 years of service suggests that resistance to stress on the part of Swiss troops may have changed in certain ways, without, however, deteriorating on the whole.

FINALLY, what about the *nuclear* aspect? The high degree of protection in the civilian sector (80 per cent provision) cannot be matched by the army at the moment of completed

¹ 'Motti', roughly, is Finnish for 'encirclement'. During the Winter War the Finns were adept at isolating and destroying advancing Soviet columns.

mobilisation.

After full deployment into combat dispositions, the army's vulnerability will be reduced significantly. As a result of the 'chessboard system', many of the defended key-spots are co-located with such obstacles as narrow passages, forest roads, and built-up areas. It is not in the interest of any aggressor to bring nuclear devastation, or neutron-induced contamination, to these *passages obligés*. As a result, the threat of the use of tactical nuclear weapons is reduced. The mechanised counter-stroke forces, kept in readiness in loose formations, are also dug in and camouflaged.

In summary, it might be said that — owing to the high level of civilian protection — defensive action could be carried out without serious damage to the home population. Exploiting their own territory, which is well-suited for defensive combat both in the tactical and operative senses, the Swiss forces should enjoy some material and psychological advantages.

At the same time, topography works against the aggressor, and these effects may even be enhanced by combat-engineering measures. The density and depth of the defence forces will compel the enemy to adopt unfamiliar operational tactics, and to accept significant losses in strength, time and prestige. The aggressor cannot make the desired use of his superior dynamics and firepower.

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Send us the 'censored' stories of the year



LAST WEEK we reported on 'Project Censored', an American endeavour to find the 'top ten censored news stories of the year'. The *New Statesman* has decided to start a British equivalent of Project Censored, and from now to the end of the year we are seeking nominations for a list of important news stories which were effectively ignored by the mass media in 1980. A panel of judges will select the 'top ten', which must meet the following requirements:

- Any story nominated should have been published in 1980 (perhaps in a specialist journal) but have received minimal publicity in terms of its potential significance.
- The story should be one with possible national or international significance, even if it springs from a strictly localised example.
- It must be based on testable documentation and reliable sources.
- It should be of contemporary, rather than purely historical importance.

Nominations should be sent to Project Censored, *New Statesman*, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ. Honour and a bottle of malt whisky will be the rewards for those whose nominations reach the top ten (with suitable alternatives available for those who can't take whisky). Deadline is 31 December.

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2	4

A lesson of hope from Eritrea

Two years ago, in the *New Statesman*, John Pilger told the story of Eritrea's largely unreported struggle for independence against the Soviet-supported regime in Ethiopia. The Eritrean war, now in its twentieth year, is surely unique, for it represents a negation of the Kissinger/Brzezinski/Brezhnev view that all the world is a chess game in which the small, resource-impooverished nations can be moved at will, or declared to be expendable. **DAN CONNELL**, an American, probably knows Eritrea better than any Western journalist: just returned from his ninth trip in four years, he takes up the story.

RANDOM MORTAR FIRE rained down on the guerrilla fortifications as we gazed out on Ethiopian army positions on the Red Sea coastal plains. 'This is normal for us. It is our daily life,' remarked brigade commander Ahmed Chimetti of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF).

With a sweep of his arm, he pointed out more than a dozen Soviet T-54 tanks hidden in the sparse bush five kilometres away. The charred hulks of two more lay in the open where they were destroyed by the nationalist Eritrean guerrillas in the most recent fighting here. Behind us, small clusters of armed men and women were busily cleaning weapons, mending clothes, preparing food and in one case singing ballads of the long and bitter war. They paid no attention to the sporadic shelling, though the acrid stench of cordite was thick in our nostrils and the exploding missiles were landing only a few score metres away.

More than 40,000 Ethiopian troops have been tied down for the past 18 months on two main battlefronts in northern Eritrea, with another 20,000 held in reserve. Yet despite a steady flow of sophisticated Soviet arms, they have been unable to mount a single successful advance through this period. A major new Ethiopian offensive has been predicted here since June, based upon reports of shipments of more Russian tanks, helicopter gunships and even a form of toxic gas. But a series of limited Ethiopian attacks during the past month, apparently designed to win a tactical advantage, has utterly failed.

While this has frustrated plans for a general counter-insurgency campaign which the guerrillas say is being masterminded by top Russian strategists, Ethiopia's ruling military Dergue (committee) is fast losing ground in its highly vulnerable rear. Continuing economic and political instability are sapping the junta's ability to prosecute the war at its present levels, while a host of other nationalist movements are also pressing in upon it.

The powerful new alliance of these movements threatens not only the survival of the beleaguered Ethiopian regime, but also the very contours of the strategic African Horn and the political position of the Soviets across this turbulent continent. Generally left-wing in their political orientation, the guerrillas are, they say, out to 'teach the Russians that revolution can be made without them'. Already the Eritrean nationalists have shown

some success in wooing otherwise pro-Soviet movements and states to back their cause. They have picked up some diplomatic support from Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conakry, Algeria and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and they are currently paying visits to Tanzania, Madagascar, Benin and other leftist African countries. Should this trend continue, the Russians might find themselves at odds with their closest allies here.

IN MY MONTH LONG tour of the Eritrean war front, I found the guerrillas supremely confident that their 19 year war for independence from Ethiopia, which annexed the former Italian colony in 1962, is finally taking a decisive turn in their favour. I was also struck by the extent to which the Eritrean nationalists are shifting their attention to a regional strategy against the Soviet-backed junta.

During the past six months, the EPLF has trained several thousand recruits for the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the

broken a series of government assaults on their rural positions during the past two weeks.

It is the OLF, however, which poses the most serious threat to the viability of the junta, for the southern Oromo people comprise over half the Ethiopian population and over half of the army itself. It is the fertile Oromo region where Ethiopia grows most of its coffee, the cash crop whose sale to Western countries finances the purchase of Russian weaponry.

THE MAIN STRENGTH of the guerrillas is their popular support, which in Eritrea reveals itself as much in the obviously affectionate day to day relations between the guerrillas and the impoverished peasant farmers and nomadic herders as it does in the apparent flow of contributions to the war effort by the civilians.

Each guerrilla brigade has its own cultural troupe which regularly performs songs, skits and dances for the villagers and the fighters. A marriage of two veteran guerrillas in our village prompted a feast of celebration attend-



EPLF 'cultural troupe' dance near the front line

Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) which operate in the heart of Ethiopia. They have also given the other movements captured Russian arms, and they have begun daily radio contact with the TPLF in neighbouring Tigray to coordinate their military and political operations. In June they opened a permanent office in Mogadishu, the Somali capital where the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) is headquartered, and there are indications that they are quietly establishing relations with dissident groups in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

Should the various autonomous opposition groups forge a working alliance, they would constitute a formidable challenge to the increasingly isolated government, whose base of power is mainly in the urban centres of the traditional ruling Athara nationality. Virtually the only thing keeping them in power today is the supply of Russian arms.

The TPLF is the fastest growing of the newer movements, now claiming to control 85 per cent of their mountainous northern province where some 40,000 Ethiopian troops are also based. A daring July raid on the historic town of Axum resulted in the capture of two Russian doctors, and the TPLF claims to have

ed by 300 local residents which lasted until near dawn. Later, more than 500 nomadic pastoralists gathered within a kilometre of the guerrilla frontlines near the government-held town of Afabet to demonstrate their opposition to the junta.

'All the people have suffered at the hands of the enemy,' said Mohamed Ali, a 60 year old nomad, during the raucous event. 'I have lost two nephews and a niece, but we have suffered most as far as our animals are concerned. They have been trying to extinguish our camels and almost all the animals we own, but regardless of this we are dedicated to win our independence.' Afterwards the EPLF held a night-long political seminar to explain their current strategy. The civilians responded by offering scores of goats and cattle to the fighters who in turn carried out a distribution of second-hand clothes to those in attendance.

The EPLF has carried out extensive land reform, and has reorganised village society to displace the traditional elite by installing new committees of poor peasants, including women and young militants. These civilian supporters are highly organised in political associations which administer daily life in the villages and provide a continuing source of

supplies and fresh volunteers for the army.

The main chink in the Eritreans' armour today is a resurgence of the long-standing rivalry between the EPLF and a second smaller movement, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). Once the most powerful nationalist army in Eritrea, the ELF has been in a sharp decline since the 1977 Soviet intervention. It now appears that this front may be in collusion with the Russians against the dominant EPLF.

The two fronts had signed a merger agreement in late 1977, but little progress has been made towards resolving their differences. EPLF leaders now charge that the ELF has broken the fragile compact between them and begun harassing EPLF units in the rear areas.

Deserters from the ELF who are now with the EPLF say the ELF has, since secret talks in Moscow last January, been agitating for a compromise with Ethiopia and war with EPLF. 'Our leaders began telling us that Ethiopia is democratic like ELF and without fighting there will be a democratic solution to our liberation,' says Hadgu Aradom, 20, a four-year veteran of ELF. The deserters say their units had avoided any combat with Ethiopia since 1978, leaving the brunt of the fighting to the EPLF in the hope it would be weakened.

THE ELF IS CHARGED with harassing civilian supporters of the EPLF in the villages, violently repressing internal opposition to their new policies and conscripting peasants into their dwindling army. Solomon Tesfai, a 19 year old ELF defector, claims that he was taken by force from his village in the southern district of Serai. 'The ELF came to our village and collected the youth. They took ten, but later they released three because their brothers were among the ten. Our parents argued against this, but they said it was the call of Eritrea and they would kill us in front of them if we refused.' The conscription began in March 1978, according to Hadgu Aradom: 'They were taking the youth from the market places, from the villages, wherever they could find them. If one escapes and he is caught, he is dressed like a woman and forced to tour the village while they beat him with leather whips.'

A Tigray guerrilla leader here for talks with EPLF termed the ELF a 'fifth column in the Horn of Africa', but with an armed force estimated at under 5,000 men, the ELF does not appear to be a serious military threat to the other allied fronts. Meanwhile, the EPLF has a surprisingly efficient infrastructure. Their army is fully mechanised, with an elaborate network of roads, economic facilities and social services. With more than 600 captured trucks and land rovers, they have the capacity to shift supplies and troops from one trouble spot to another almost overnight.

Each operational zone also has hidden grain mills, small farms, underground repair shops, hospital facilities, supply depots and schools. A visit to one set of workshops found the guerrillas manufacturing spare parts for captured arms, stitching new uniforms, smelting discarded artillery shells and casting hand grenade casings, as well as making school desks, artificial limbs for disabled fighters, and shovel blades and other tools.

Much of the daily activity of the rank and file guerrilla fighters was not directly military. At the Afabet battlefield, the guerrillas started their day in organised political discussions on the issues facing the Oromo front. By 10 am, they were studying simple fractions in a third grade mathematics class. After a lunch of soft



A member of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front takes aim

Dan Connell

flatbread, spicy lentils and hot, sugary tea, they fanned out into work teams to chop trees and dig more tunnels in an effort to strengthen their existing fortifications.

The terrain and the brutal climate appear to be key factors in this phase of the war. The mountains tend to neutralise the effectiveness of the Russian armour while the scorching temperatures, to which the Eritreans are accustomed, appear to be taking a heavy toll among the Ethiopian troops who are mainly drawn from the temperate central and southern Ethiopian highlands.

The high cliffs are being turned into a labyrinthine fortress with gun emplacements hollowed out of the hardpacked dirt and shale, gunslits open to the valley below. Squads of guerrillas chop the gnarled stubby tree trunks into short, thick logs which are stacked by the score in central locations for use in building roofs.

Among the weapons seen here are Russian-made AK-47 automatic rifles, RPG-7-grenade launchers and .40 calibre machine guns. On a nearby mountaintop are hidden Soviet T-54 tanks and 120 mm artillery pieces said to have been captured in previous battles.

A low ceiling of grey clouds offers some relief from the suffocating heat, but a fierce hail storm fails to dampen the spirits of the fighters who simply halt their work tempor-

arily and huddle together under tattered woollen blankets. Late in the day, the heavy work yields to individual tasks such as sewing patches on mismatched uniforms, cleaning weapons or studying the morning's lessons. One group of guerrillas descends to the valley for a game of football, and several assemble by a campfire for singing and dancing. The mood is almost carefree but for the young woman who works laboriously on a makeshift gas mask. The EPLF appears to take quite seriously the threat of chemical warfare. Most of the fighters here have made simple masks of cloth, plastic and charcoal. Group seminars have been conducted on the effect of various toxic gases and on measures to take against them, such as special protective clothing, ventilation of underground shelters and rapid dispersal of army units in the event of gas attack, according to guerrilla leaders. Frontline medical teams have been equipped with scientific kits for collecting samples of gas to enable quick analysis and to provide hard evidence for the outside world.

'We are getting ready in a primitive way,' said squad leader Ezghaharia Ghilankiel. 'We will take some more lessons in the course of the battle, but in the end this can change nothing.'

NS readers wishing to help the Eritreans should get in touch with the Eritrean Relief Association, c/o 261A Finchley Road, London NW3. Telephone: 01-431 2431.

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London Diary

□ I am not a great believer in the conspiracy theory of history or politics, but the compact recently achieved by the press, police and National Front in Birmingham necessitates a brief comment. Following the decision of the Republican prisoners in Long Kesh to go on hunger strike, an H-Block Hunger Strike Action Group was established in Birmingham. It embarked on a campaign to get signatures for a petition which demanded 'political prisoner status' for the H-Block men and announced a torchlight protest demonstration for 27 October to be led by people clothed in blankets. Within days over 1000 local people had signed the petition, including eight local Labour Councillors. And therein begins our tale. The *Birmingham Evening Mail*, a rag which makes the *Sun* appear radical, went into action. Its policy-makers were clearly determined to utilise the occasion to ensure that its journalistic standards were maintained. On 24 October it carried the following headline: 'Labour eight back IRA blanket men'. The report was clearly designed to provoke a campaign against the eight councillors. The following day the front-page lead celebrated the paper's success: 'QUIT — 8 IN IRA STORM TOLD'. A Conservative MP, Anthony Beaumont-Dark, and 'dozens of callers protested to the *Evening Mail* today about the councillors backing the IRA men'.

That was the sum total on which the headline was based. In an editorial composed on the same day ('Labouring in an unsavoury cause') the paper defended prison conditions: 'Prisons are not easy places to be; they are not intended to be. The more vicious the prisoners they house, the more rigorous the regime.'

The local fascists had got the message loud and clear. On 27 October, as 200 demonstrators assembled, they found themselves surrounded by National Front supporters, armed with iron bars and bags full of half-bricks. The demonstrators were attacked and a 22 year old woman student ended up in hospital with head injuries. After the NF had disposed of all their bricks the police arrived. Superintendent Gerald Crisp told journalists that he had not seen any point in having a large number of officers present at the assembly point. Given the fact that a local paper had whipped up hysteria and that the NF had made no secret of its 'counter-demonstration' why was Supt. Crisp less than anxious to protect the demonstrators, in striking contrast to the care with which fascist marches are protected, especially when they march through black neighbourhoods?

□ I recently received a copy of *TV Crimes* in the post. It is a special supplement to the *Durham Street Press* and is entirely devoted to the thorny question as to which group of magnates will obtain the lucrative North-East franchise from the IBA. The present holders, Tyne Tees, are under the control of Tory squires such as Sir Ralph Carr-Ellison, Viscount Ridley and a few others who collectively hold 70 directorships. They are facing a new challenge from the TV North consortium. Its chairman is Sir Monty Finniston, late of British Steel and now a director of GKN as well as fourteen other firms. He has a strong team which includes Stephen Keynes, who sits on the boards of three multi-nationals in addition

to being a financial consultant to the millionaires of the Arab Gulf; Baroness Masham of Ilton, a high Tory lady married to the Earl of Swinton and Michael Straker, former Chairman of the Northern Area Conservatives and High Sheriff of Northumberland in 1977. The third contender is Norseman and, yes, its Chairman is Paul Nicholson, Managing Director of Vaux Breweries. He is supported by sundry captains of industry, all of whom are loyal supporters of the Conservative Party. There is, however, a tiny difference with the other competitors. Norseman has succeeded in securing the services of Tom Burlison and Joe Mills, both of whom are respectively Regional Secretaries of the T&GWU and the G&MWU in the North-East. This is clearly designed to impress the IBA and any illusions that the two trade-union bureaucrats might have would soon be dispelled in the eventuality of Norseman striking gold. Local militants offer another suggestion: given the rate at which unemployment is rising in the North-East, the two unions, too, might be forced to make cuts and their regional bosses are simply ensuring their futures. What is beyond dispute is that whoever wins, the Tyneside viewers will lose.

□ I have never believed, unlike some others on the left, that the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan had very much to do with the internal politics of that country. Least of all had it anything to do with socialism, and as the first anniversary of the occupation approaches the Kremlin politicians must be looking for a way out of the impasse. The choices are extremely limited. They could assimilate Afghanistan on the Outer Mongolian pattern, but that would tie up badly-needed resources and could import instability into Soviet Central Asia. The only other option would be to do a deal with the right-wing forces, establish a national government and then withdraw. At the moment, however, none of the opposition is prepared to talk and growing sections of the left, especially the *Khalq* wing of the ruling 'People's Democratic' party are now openly against the continued presence of Soviet troops. There are indications that Brezhnev is considering an audacious counterstroke. Exiled Afghans state that a plan is afoot to restore the monarchy and put Zahir Shah back on the throne. After all the Soviet government has worked with him before for many years. The problem could be Babrak Karmal. The last time he had to be removed he was appointed Ambassador in Prague. When he returned one of his leading PDPA opponents was made Ambassador to Outer Mongolia. In that spirit one could suggest that Karmal could now be despatched to the crucial capital city of Warsaw.

□ Larry Herman is a photographer who has been working for the last two years in Northern Ireland and compiling a volume of war photographs. He is an active member of the NUJ's Freelance branch and is being supported by the Arts Council (he won their major photographs bursary). The Irish connection meant that his name and possibly his photograph must have entered some Special Branch file. A week ago Herman was walking through Brixton market, behind the police station, when two men walked up to him. They were total strangers to Herman. One of them asked: 'When are you going back to Ireland, Larry?' Somewhat puzzled, Herman asked why they were interested. Back came the reply:

'We know all about what you're doing.' Herman is now considering raising the matter at his union branch where, one trusts, well-known defenders of civil liberties such as Bernard Levin will be only too delighted to take up the case.

□ Gore Vidal's acidic comments on the American elections were a real treat on BBC 2 last Saturday. It is so unusual to hear the truth being spoken so aggressively in the realm of politics on British TV that one gets a bit of a culture shock. Vidal is also a novelist, screenwriter and playwright. It appears that some political pundits in this country are also thinking of branching out and displaying their talents in other fields. Peter Jenkins of the *Guardian* has written a play which opens this week at the Lyric Theatre. Its subject: the Labour Party. It is meant to be a serious play, but I'm sure that polytechnic students, supporters of Tony Benn and sundry Marxists will not be excluded, provided of course that they don't indulge in lumpen vices (such as laughing in the wrong places).

Tariq Ali

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

□ Convicted prisoners in Brixton Jail are taking it in turns to escape from their cells and then return again after 'midnight pub crawls', Scotland Yard said last night. Recent police suspicions crystallised when one of the 100 convicted Category C prisoners was arrested in the early hours of the morning trying to scale a jail wall to get back inside — *Daily Telegraph* (G. Moor)

□ She isn't worried about any rowdiness in the audience because, as she says, 'You can't find many rougher places than Margate and I handled things pretty well there.' — *Bucks Free Press* (Sydney Urry)

□ He sells canes 'for walloping children'. Orders have been rolling in at the rate of 400 a week since he started advertising them with the slogan 'Parents who cane care.' — *Daily Star* (Russell Holmes)

□ In North Cornwall about 300 applications have been received by the district council from tenants wanting to buy their own homes. About half a dozen applicants are on social security. — *Cornish Guardian* (R.E. Shoebridge)

□ At the end of the rally Mr Foot received a standing ovation, Mr Kinnock gave a warning that 'he who forgets his history sleeps in the gutter of slavery', and the entire hall rose to sing the first and last verses of the *Red Flag* with such enthusiasm that even *The Times* correspondent could not forbear joining in. — *The Times* (Julia Langdon)

□ Tory-controlled Somerset Education Authority wants to install Space Invaders electronic games in schools, so children can use their spending money to cut school meal losses — *Guardian* (Maureen Plummer)

□ Transfer fees for social workers on the same lines as used for football players were suggested yesterday by Mr Albert Long, chairman of Strathclyde social work committee. — *Daily Telegraph* (G. Moor)

□ Like Callaghan's succession to Wilson, Mr Foot would both symbolise Labour's further descent into domination by Marxists, maniacs and Luddites, and speed on the process. — *Leader in Daily Telegraph* (G. Moor)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PPPS re P&S: Mr Pole-Carew's view

From C.G. Pole-Carew

I understand you published an article based on minutes of a private meeting held by the Senior Executives of Portsmouth & Sunderland Newspapers at which I was the speaker (NS 26 September). This meeting was one of a series which, in practical terms, formed a seminar. The overall subject was the possibility of introducing new technology into the company's papers. To this end the company wished to discover what reactions they would receive from trade union organisations and to find out what steps could be taken to mitigate any activities designed to prevent them carrying out their managerial decisions.

At Nottingham we have much experience of coming under attack from trade unions and so, since it would be in the interests of our company for another company to follow a path of modernisation to the standards acceptable abroad, I gave a talk to P&S based on our experience. I described the kind of steps unions take either to further their own ends or to thwart the intentions of those whose aims they consider to be to their disadvantage. Added to these were details of steps we took to defend ourselves. All those who have had any contentious dealings with trade unions will know that coercion, intimidation and physical violence are common methods in unions' battles to achieve their own ends.

It will come as no surprise then, although your article seemed to avoid the point, to learn that such successes as we achieved were really by giving the trade unionists as good as we received. Members of our staff who were loyal to us were threatened by trade union officials that bricks would be thrown through their windows and their families molested if they didn't come out on strike in 1973.

You seem to consider in your article that I am somewhat obsessed by security; bearing in mind that you have obtained a copy of the minutes of a meeting, when I was unaware that notes were being taken, and where only your revelations led me to obtain a copy of those minutes, let alone check them before they were circulated, I would have thought that my concern for security was not unjustified.

I find it hard that you criticise Sir Richard Storey's chairmanship of P&S when you point to the highly successful profit record that has been achieved by the company when under his chairmanship. Whoever his grandfather may have been, Sir Richard is undoubtedly the man for the job today and that, I submit, is what really matters not only to the shareholders but also to the employees.

T. Bailey Forman Ltd, PO Box 99, Forman Street, Nottingham

Prudence Farmer — a wasted opportunity?

From Paul Driver

I am reluctant to let the occasion of this year's Prudence Farmer poetry award (NS 17 October) pass without demur. It must be counted one of the relatively few opportunities for poets to be given prominence. All the more disturbing, therefore, that the latest bestowal should strike a resounding note of meretricious brilliance.

Decidedly, our contemporary brilliance is becoming ever heavier cultural baggage. What kind of despair is behind the unnatural anxiety to dazzle that informs the writing of both prize-giver and recipients in the present case? And what collusion is between the virtuoso of the brilliant generalisation and the two virtuosos of the brilliant riddling particular? As regards Mr Conrad's effrontery in choosing the precise family dogs of two years ago, we might say it transfigures the improbable by treating it with reverence.

The disadvantage of such brilliance is that it illumines but cannot create. So Mr Conrad's prose style affords a kaleidoscope of cross-cultural substitutions but is incapable of creating values; shuns responsibility indeed to the point of vandalism. So Mr Raine's ingenious verse cannot in the end rise out of face-

tiousness to create convincing emotions. In both cases the creative aptitudes of language itself are vitiated: Conrad's prose is formulaic, unsupple and too studious of vocabulary; Raine's verse is wooden of rhythm and rhyme (often it reads like good journalistic prose).

I am not convinced by Mr Conrad's distinction between Raine and those of his 'school'. In what way are Blake Morrison's 'two child-sized coffins' (i.e. stereo-speakers) less acceptable than Raine's 'wood-wormed brogues' or Christopher Reid's barmaid's 'no-man's-counter' when sheer metaphor is essentially the point in all three poems? No-one would deny that Raine is an extremely talented poet, nor that metaphor is the heart of poetry. But I submit that Raine's relentless obtrusion of metaphor is something of a disease of the eye, actually inhibits seeing. Take a couple of analogies: Emily Dickinson's snake ('The Grass divides as with a Comb') or Ted Hughes's end-of-autumn ('the year packs up/Like a tatty fair-ground/That came for the children') — these are truly poignant metaphors because language and form in the poems in which they occur give them a context of statement. The Kingdom of God cometh not indeed with observation. Raine has undoubtedly risked (if the fustian metaphor may be excused) throwing the baby out with the bath-water.

4 Scarth Road, London SW13

Investing other people's wages

From Illyd Harrington, Deputy Leader, GLC Opposition

I was much taken with the thoughts of Richard Minns and the analysis of Christopher Hird in 'The Concentration of Corporate Power' (NS 24 October). It bore out many of the conclusions of the advisers to the GLC Superannuation Fund who, in a confidential report, last month advocated investment in the USA and Japan rather than in British 'industry' in Britain because they claimed a 20-year decline showed no sign of ending.

The proposal of the Labour Party in London would, if acceptable to the workers whose 'delayed wages' are in question, not only fund wealth-creating projects in London, but also, in Mr Minns's words, challenge 'the worst aspects of the current control of pension funds' and point some of the way to 'an alternative investment strategy'.

Room 133, The County Hall, London SE1

Down on the farm

From Marion Shoard

S. B. Boaler suggests (Letters NS 31 October) that rather than resorting to planning controls in the countryside we should convince farmers to curb their own excesses. Would he also hope to convince those seeking to develop quarries, offices, factories, houses or hotels to restrain their appetite for profit on behalf of the rest of the community? Fortunately, he would not need to as these are subject to the planning system. And there is no obvious reason why farmers should continue to be above the law.

Mr Boaler asserts cheerfully that 'it is very difficult for a small group to continue behaving in defiance of public opinion'. Unfortunately, however, public opinion counts for little if you have the Establishment on your side. The farmers do; and through the energetic efforts of one of the most formidable pressure groups in the country, the National Farmers' Union, they can be relied on to maintain it. The methods Mr Boaler advocates have in any case already been tried and seen to fail. In the 1950s, when agricultural change first emerged as a potential threat to the traditional English landscape, conservationists were happy to rely on persuasion to contain agricultural excesses, so confident were they of farmers' innate good will towards the countryside. Unfortunately, farmers, who are only human, soon found it impossible to resist the lure of the vast profits opened up to them by a combination of large state subsidies and new technology. As a result, the traditional English

landscape is now turning into a dreary food factory. Attempts to persuade farmers to desist from pursuing their economic interests for the sake of conservation have not prevented, for example, hedgerow loss running at a rate of 4,500 miles a year. Time is not on our side. Town planning has proved its worth in safeguarding the built environment. Our countryside needs it.

15 Melbury Gardens, London SW20

Kaptain Kockroach and the hazards of work

From Bernard Jones

The UK has about 22m workers and the number of factory inspectors is being cut from over 900 to 850, about half of whom work in the field. The UK has been poorly served in the matter of factory inspection. The failure to control asbestos poisoning, for example, over the period 1906-1972 is a classic piece of misgovernment. I have never heard it suggested that today's inspector does not pay his way. The reduction in the inspectorate will simply increase unemployment and contribute to an increase in the number of people having arms torn off, being dragged through rollers, succumbing to accidental poisoning, and so forth.

Government is about individuals or it is about nothing. The cartoonist Gilbert Shelton has a character, Kaptain Kockroach, who frequently loses cockroaches but invariably tells his aide: 'Never mind, we have plenty more where they came from.' This will do very well for a motto for industrial safety policy in any country sufficiently dehumanised.

8E New Cavendish Street, London W1

Alternatives to doomsday

From Pat Ainley

Congratulations on printing David Fernbach's appreciation of Tom Wintringham (NS 24 October). The issues raised are those that confront the Left again as the question of war or peace once more becomes the most important political question.

As E.P. Thompson points out in *Protest and Survive*, a growing peace movement for nuclear disarmament will have to face attempts to discredit it on the grounds that it is pro-Soviet. Too often spokespersons for CND and unilateralists in the Labour Party give ground to this accusation by criticising only the USA and NATO and not equally castigating the USSR and Warsaw Pact. We cannot rely upon either one of them to protect us from the other. We have to rely upon ourselves. That means presenting our own alternative defence. We reject a nuclear defence because it is suicidal, expensive and plays the games of the authoritarian bunker state. But we must have an alternative to it because it is obvious to all except a brain-washed few that Russia is an aggressive imperialist power which threatens Western Europe. Our alternative can only be a democratic and popular one by which any invader would be swamped in the waves of a people's war. Even this involves the risk that the enemy might use nuclear or other equally terrible weapons of mass destruction to which our forces would have no reply. But the possession of the bomb did not help the Americans in Vietnam, nor is it of any use to the Russians in Afghanistan. And to those who say that Britain is not a guerrilla country, we have only to look to the cities and towns of Northern Ireland to see how a determined people can resist a militarily superior invader.

13 Osier Court, Osier Street, London E1

Re-assessment of 'Democratic Kampuchea'

From Alan R. Wheatley

Following Anthony Barnett's revelations concerning Britain's UN vote in favour of the re-recognition of the 'Democratic Kampuchea' of Pol Pot, can we expect the Foreign Office to publish a pamphlet under the title *Did Two Million Really Die?*

78 Fairhazel Gardens, London NW6

One tends in one's mind to slot people into this or that category and locality but readers who have got me firmly slotted as 'obese retired schoolmaster now permanently resident in Devon' may be startled to learn that at regular intervals I up-anchor, take our local taxi (dear Mrs Smale at the wheel and a model of careful locomotion) to Exeter, board a speedy Inter-City (almost always dead on time) for Paddington, and become, in just over two hours, the smart man-about-town, with a matinée here and a lunch party there and a cheery word ('Hi there, Denzil!') for old friends at the Reform Club, gathered together at drinks time in our elegant and spacious pillared saloon, the finest in London. Although I usually manage a short visit to Great Turnstile (such a fine sense of purpose in the building) where, as in every way the oldest inhabitant, for I date professionally from 1935, they treat me very kindly with plastikups of coffee and welcoming smiles and are ready to overlook my deep admiration (and I mean it) for splendid Mrs T, the actual purpose of my time in London is very often concerned with this or that programme at the BBC, an establishment where I date back even further (1934) and to the austere Reith days when male broadcasters wore, after 6 p.m., dinner-jackets and ladies were in long dresses and when the only alcohol permitted in the building was a half-bottle of brandy in the resident nurse's emergency kit.

The details of the BBC activities in which I take part, now here, now there and sometimes to be seen in glorious colour (my entire wardrobe has now been revealed to TV viewers and I must soon re-stock at, where else, The Stores), need not concern us here for it is only to a tiny facet of these matters that I wish to draw your attention, namely cash, and in no sordid or carping way, I hasten to add. Although the pre-war television fees can only be described as piffling (painted bright yellow, one was grilled under an appalling battery of lights at Alexandra Palace, while all of 15,000 people living within range goggled at our flickerings), they now reward one handsomely if, in addition to being audible, one is also going to be visible and to expose oneself to the public. Why this should be worth more money when ordinary sound radio (nothing but the voice to help you, you see) is rather more difficult to make pleasing, I do not know.

In their courteous and helpful way, for the Reith *esprit de corps* lives on, the BBC from time to time sends its artistes, for such we proudly call ourselves, a Statement of Payment for Services, useful to accountants and in Income Tax assessments, and this is where bizarrerie rears its head and one's eyes pop in amazement. The Statement arrives in a longish white envelope 9" x 5½" in size (I neither know nor care what that would come to in metres) and is labelled PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL on the outside, thus leading every Paul Pry and inquisitive visitor straight to it. In a space 4" x 1½" one's name and address appear, clearly stamped on by an Addressograph machine, or whatever those soulless and labour-saving contraptions are called, which leaves quite a large area of envelope free for embellishments. Part of this

is taken up by a jokey announcement saying LICK THE LICENCE (get it?) which advises the purchase of 50p TV stamps, but this still leaves space and to spare.

I do so wish that fate had allowed me to be at the staff meeting ('Let's all get together and just hammer this thing out, no matter how long it takes') at which the leading BBC officials, Stationery Section, decided how best to fill this inviting space. What suggestions, one so longs to know, were made? Reith in profile? A snap of nice Angela Rippon? A line of Director Generals Down The Ages? What they did in fact come up with was a likeness of a giant draught board, totally bare of draught men, over 2' square and totalling, with twenty spaces along each side, 400 empty spaces in all, attractively picked out in black and, naturally, white. This, with an 'If undelivered' address, completes the front of the envelope, but wait, there is better to come!

Turning the envelope over, we find (and here the BBC's helpfulness reaches its apogee) full instructions as to how actually to open the envelope. A dotted line is to be seen and a printed message accompanies it. 'To open, cut along this dotted line', it says and that, one would think, would be that, but not at all. At the beginning of the dotted line there is a lifelike facsimile of a pair of scissors, all ready open and in a cutting position. But stay, we haven't finished yet! Even with the dotted line carefully cut along and the exciting envelope

Roger Woddiss

Maggielomania

'What I feel now is that we have got a sort of motorway madness.' — Geoffrey Rippon, Tory MP for Hexham.

She drives in a delirious way,
Her blunders to perform;
She guards against the rainy day
By heading for the storm.

Deep in the cavern of her mind,
Where maggots eat their fill,
She boasts of being deaf and blind,
And works her iron will.

Ye fearful wets, fresh courage take
And bless her golden head;
All those now famishing for cake
Will thrive on mouldy bread.

Judge not the Lady's feeble sense,
Nor scorn her well-groomed grace;
Behind a mask of confidence
She hides a shrunken face.

Her promised blooms are fading fast,
And perish by the hour;
Her cuts will bring the winter blast,
And dead will be the flower.

The medicine her gods prefer
Puts poison in the vein;
She is her own interpreter,
And proud to be insane.

finally open, those kind officials evidently pictured their artistes as being completely baffled as to how next to proceed and how on earth to extract whatever might lie within. And so, to make everything crystal clear, they caused to be printed a final instruction: GRASP CONTENTS AND SNAP THEM OUT. Did you ever!

Oh, once again, to have been there, to have been a fly on the wall, and a fly with good ears and retentive memory, while the actual wording of this quite unique message was being fully discussed at Broadcasting House. Somewhere on the first floor, I imagine, with the Grade 2 furnishings. 'I'm not too happy about that "grasp", Tim. It has a sort of sense of urgency, of panic almost, that I feel we don't quite need here. What do you think, Benjie?' 'I agree. How about "take hold of"?' 'Ummm. A bit clumsy perhaps. I think we discussed "clutch" yesterday, didn't we, and rejected it. That was you, wasn't it, Jumbo?' 'Er, yes. But I'm quite happy to let it go.' 'Well, I suggest we leave that for the moment and go on to this word "snap". This was Phil's idea and frankly, good though it is, I'm not quite at ease with it — no offence, Phil. You see, my jolly old dicker certainly says that "to snap at" can mean to grasp but if we change that to SNAP AT THEM one's mind is going to fly to cairns and postmen's trousers. Ha ha. Oh good, here's Penny with the coffee. I suggest we break for half an hour and then attack this thing with fresh minds.'

It is, alas, only to be expected that the piece of paper contained inside could not possibly live up to the excitement that its extraction has occasioned, although it has its features of interest, its quietly charming moments. It urges me to pass itself without delay to 'your income tax adviser, if you have one', with the delicate implication that it is somehow not quite socially right to be without one. It gives me my reference number, which appears to be AD 18301 and which is, I suppose, preferable to BC 18301. It provides, framed in a sort of window, perhaps for emphasis, my total earnings of the year, which I knew already. It tells me where to direct all queries and correspondence relating to this total, and the typed address has evidently proved too lengthy and exhausting for the typing operative for it is given in abbreviated form as '33 Cav Sq', which I take to be Cavendish Square. One shudders to think what, in similar tired circumstances, they would make of 33 Peel Drive (NW9). 33 Pee Dri, I suppose.

And then suddenly, in the very middle of the paper, it says '15'. Fifteen what, may I ask? Fifteen is by no means an unpopular number in the rich pastures of English Literature. There were, as you will recall and with a hearty Yo-ho-ho, fifteen men on the dead man's chest, though I can hardly think that the BBC would, in this connection, allow a verse in obvious praise of the demon rum to receive any sort of official recognition or advertisement. 'Cold in the earth — and fifteen wild Decembers' wrote poor Emily Brontë, possibly to distract her thoughts when deafened by Branwell's tipsy shrieks, 'From those brown hills, have melted into spring', though it seems improbable that this is here the meaning of 15. Sheridan's toast from *The School for Scandal* and which runs, in its original form and with no thought of its distasteful modern variations, 'Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen' is quite inapplicable here. It's a mystery, locked for ever in the bosom of 33 Cav Sq.

BOOKS IN GENERAL

Colin Bundy

White on Black

When the Anglo-Boer War broke out, *Punch* cartoonists depicted the Boers as blustering, clumsy and comical foreigners. Within months, after the initial spate of Boer victories, the same artists showed them instead as a heavily armed, unscrupulous and dangerous foe. At times, ingeniously if illogically, the two sets of images were combined: Boers were seen as both risible and threatening, simultaneously archaic backwoodsmen and a menace to Imperial sway.

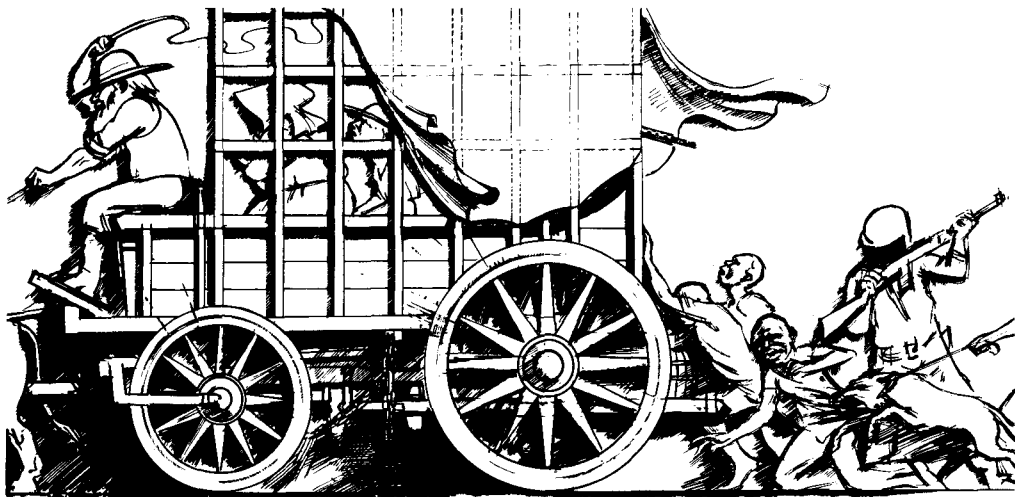
A similar device persists in much contemporary analysis and description of South Africa. The Afrikaner is defined historically in terms of attitudes inherited from the 18th and 19th centuries (Calvinism, cultural isolation, frontier-derived racism, and so on). He is then castigated, in the present tense, for adhering to these anachronistic and irrational attitudes: for insisting upon a system of racial discrimination that affronts both western political norms and free enterprise. Apartheid (as a leading historian puts it) is 'politically unwise, economically unprofitable, and morally reprehensible'.

In recent years, dissenting and radical scholars have criticised this approach. An alternative interpretation has sought to identify racial domination as the historically specific form of capitalist exploitation in South Africa; to show that labour repressive institutions and economic growth have been causally linked, and not dysfunctional; and to insist that neither 'the Afrikaner' nor 'the Afrikaner nation' can take all the credit for the vicious, violent, and morally corrupt route pursued by the South African ruling class. Despite this, the Janus-headed Afrikaner — at once obsolescent and omnipotent — is still alive and well in many of the new books on apartheid.

He stalks, for example, through the pages of *The Psychology of Apartheid*. After 1800 'the worst features of Dutch colonial existence were preserved intact' into the 20th century. The *trekboers* were isolated, ignorant and obstinate; they possessed a 'physical animal cunning'; and 'the Afrikaner's warped perspective has survived unchanged and intact since the 1830s'. Today (although they 'defy logic and common sense') the 'real

Afrikaners, the Machiavellian manipulators of the country' exercise total control: the security forces operate with 'uncanny accuracy and relatively little effort' as the oppressed majority are manoeuvred into one or other form of psychological dependence or subjugation.

Peter Lambley, a Briton educated in Zambia and South Africa, qualified and practised in Cape Town as a psychotherapist and a clinical psychologist. He fled South Africa in February 1978 under distressing personal circumstances, and has now written a disjointed and unsatisfactory book, partly intellectual autobiography, partly a psychological explanation of South African social dynamics.



He worked in a university, in a state mental hospital, and in private practice, and his details of these and snippets from case studies provide shockingly vivid glimpses of the different forms of psychological strain imposed on men and women in an authoritarian society. But even these are too often undercut or distorted by the inferences Lambley draws or the assertions he makes; some of his elaborate theorising rests on rickety foundations.

In *Anatomy of Apartheid* Afrikaners are contrasted unfavourably with the English-speaking white community in South Africa ('with its long heritage and profound respect for the law') and found to be deficient in history and corrupted by power. This lightweight and eccentric book by a retired journalist promises a balanced account ('For there is a lot that is good; a lot that is foul') of the South African scene. It has a lengthy section on the 1978 Muldergate scandal constructed roughly on the lines of the Christmas present recalled by Dylan Thomas: it told you everything about the wasp, except why. The author was for 15 years the Johannesburg correspondent of the *Daily Express*, and his prose style throughout is engagingly close to parody ('In South Africa this book will be slammed, slated and hammered').

The Afrikaner also occupies front of stage, though in a significantly different role, in a new book by Robert Rotberg, a right-of-centre American academic. He presumably intends to disarm in describing it as a book that 'can be read comfortably on trains and airplanes and in company boardrooms'. To this end he provides briskly competent political and economic surveys of South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. He also spells out his preferred policy option in South Africa: support for peaceful transition from minority to majority rule. Rotberg disavows the possibility of change either in the normal way by the ballot box or through revolution. He admires the forcefulness of the Pretoria oligarchy — 'strong leadership is not only needed, but available' — he welcomes P.W. Botha's 'dramatic new initiative', and hopes for an 'orderly, leader-influenced, evolutionary resolution' to the current imbroglio.

The significance of this desire is that it is the very one shared by Western investors, the Sullivan Code employers, and their governments. The chorus of editorial approval greeting the recent Cabinet changes in South Africa heralded these as further pledges of Botha's

reformist sincerity, and glossed over the real meaning of General Magnus Malan's appointment as Minister of Defence. Malan's new job formalises the great political leverage exercised by military top brass over the past two years. A crisply informative pamphlet, *The Apartheid War Machine* (which maintains or surpasses the high standard of this series) shows how a major consequence of the streamlining and centralisation of government departments by Botha has been to effect a large-scale entry by the military into policy-making. It also charts the vast spending on defence; the rapid advances made in domestic arms production (South Africa now exports major weapons systems); and a Civil Defence programme that has made military preparedness in South Africa a fact of life as well as a political slogan.

Three of the books under review do not espouse the 'peculiar white tribe' approach. Explicitly in one case and implicit in all of them are reminders that domination and exploitation have sources other than Afrikaner history or the racist psyche. They demonstrate that the callous paternalism of 'liberal' employers, the pragmatic reforms of multinational companies, the craven behaviour of the legal and other professions, the computerised

The Psychology of Apartheid by PETER LAMBLEY *Secker* £9.75

Anatomy of Apartheid by H. LINDSAY SMITH *Rex Collins* £7.95

Suffer the Future: Policy Choices in Southern Africa by ROBERT ROTBERG *Harvard* £9

The Apartheid War Machine by INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE & AID FUND 50p

Maids and Madams by JACKLYN COCK *Ravan Children Under Apartheid* by INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE & AID FUND £2.50

Justice in South Africa by JOHN JACKSON *Secker* £7.95 *Penguin* £1.95

Organize or Starve! by KEN LUCKHARDT and BRENDA WALL *Lawrence & Wishart* £7.95 & £3.50

bureaucratic terrorism of the contract labour system — as much as the political supremacy of the National party or the reliance on security surveillance and brutality — are all facets of the same social reality.

Jacklyn Cock's study of domestic service in the eastern Cape is instructive and valuable. Black female domestic workers are trebly disadvantaged: their ultra-exploitability is defined by gender, race, and class. Detailed interviews with a sample of 175 servants and 50 employers explore and amplify their plight. Domestic workers are recruited from women who are among the poorest, least educated, and most heavily burdened with family responsibilities. Their hours are long, leisure time minimal, and their family life savagely disrupted. To keep their children alive, these women enter employment that by its nature forces them to neglect their offspring. (The various forms of deprivation and want endured by black children in South Africa is the concern of another IDAF publication, *Children Under Apartheid*, illustrated with over 100 fine photographs.) A portion of their wages is received as food rations and cast-off clothing. Only 6.4 per cent of the sample earned over R40 (£25) per month in cash; 75 per cent earned less than R30. In rural districts, the average cash wage was R11.25 (£7) a month.

Beyond these and other depressing statistics, the interviews also endow the book with a memorable and richly textured dimension. Ms Cock allows her subjects to speak for themselves — for page after page — and their voices are unforgettable. The 'maids' are variously matter of fact, reticent, and eloquent. They identify the chores they loathe, and indulge in fantasies — vengeful or compassionate — of how they would behave as employers of their 'madams'. For their part, the employers exhibit an insensitivity and moral myopia that seems almost wilful.

Repression of a different order in *Justice in South Africa*. A gymnasium in a police complex doubles as a makeshift courtroom. Police in camouflage battle uniforms and with automatic rifles throng the court and its surrounds; lawyers must make themselves heard over the frenzy of police Alsatians and the din of helicopters. The gym and a lecture room nearby have been pressed into emergency service to cope with the sheer volume of cases in which black teenagers are hauled from cell to court to face charges of riotous behaviour, arson, sabotage . . . This is not a set-piece in a Tom Sharpe novel. It is what happened in Algoa park, a Port Elizabeth suburb, in 1977. There a local lawyer named John Jackson somewhat adventitiously became involved as defence attorney for hundreds of the young blacks who had taken to the streets during the protracted rising of urban youth which convulsed South Africa in 1976-7.

For three decades the South African judiciary has been progressively shorn of its former standards of fairness and independence. Confessions obtained by torture from detainees held incommunicado, security laws so drafted as to qualify stone-throwing or slogan painting as sabotage (minimum sentence: five years) — these had been in use for over a decade by 1977. In that year, however, the law-makers took fresh pains to expedite conveyor-belt 'justice' in the wake of the youth rebellion. In terms of the new Criminal Procedure Act, the state need no longer prove that 'confessions' made by detainees were freely and voluntarily exacted. A

written confession is admissible as evidence unless the defence can prove beyond reasonable doubt that its production was coerced. The willingness of magistrates to accept the police version of events was immeasurably buttressed by a Judge's ruling that evidence of police assaults by four of Jackson's clients was 'a deliberate attempt to discredit the police and the good work the police do'.

The sequence of police 'security' actions, arrests (Q: how do you identify ringleaders after a riot? — A: Visit the all-black hospital and round up all admitted with gunshot wounds), assault and torture, trial, conviction and savage sentencing becomes numbingly familiar.

The weight of state harassment — bannings, banishments, torture and death, prison and exile — has been imposed particularly severely on South Africans who have resisted class and racial oppression by seeking to organise black workers in trade unions. Worker resistance in South Africa is as old as wage employment there, and organised union activity by and for black workers began in 1919. The importance of this tradition is acknowledged in *Organise or Starve*, but the core of this book is its detailed account of the formation, policies, and struggle of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU).

At SACTU's inaugural conference in 1955 delegates of all races, representing 33 unions, brought into being a trade union coordinating body of clear purpose. SACTU enlisted as a member of the Congress Alliance of the 1950s — the loose grouping of the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies which mounted campaigns of civil disobedience, boycotts, and political strikes in the years before Sharpeville. Especially at the leadership level. SACTU and ANC links were extremely close.

Luckhardt and Wall have written an official (or, as they style it, a 'commemorative') history of the movement. As such, it is naturally proud of SACTU's achievements and record, but at times too uncritical of the leadership's tactics and strategies. (In 1960 — immediately after Sharpeville — 'the readiness of the Black working class to move spontaneously beyond the Congress Alliance leadership into further resistance' was apparent.) It is also a history of the utmost importance. It provides an exceptionally detailed reconstruction of a decade of trade union work under the most adverse conditions; the dedication and bravery of the workers makes, quite simply, inspiring reading.

In 1973 a wave of strikes shook South Africa and ended eleven years of relative quiescence on the industrial front. Since then employers and the state have deployed the entire range of tactics open to them: bannings and detention of outspoken leaders; baton charges, tear gas, and mass deportations to the rural 'homelands'; the incorporationist tactics of the Wiehahn Commission, and the creation of 'company unions'. The leverage available to skilled workers with rights of urban domicile (like the car workers in the Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage complex) is very different from that of unskilled and migrant workers (like the routed Johannesburg municipal workers). What the SACTU history clearly establishes is underscored by the events of the past few months: the struggle for and by trade unions in South Africa will have a profound influence upon when and how the structures of racial and class exploitation are torn down.

James Campbell

Four-Hour Week

Wise Blood by FLANNERY O'CONNOR
Introduction by V. S. Pritchett *Faber* £2.95

The Violent Bear It Away by FLANNERY O'CONNOR
Introduction by Paul Bailey *Faber* £2.95

Everything That Rises Must Converge by FLANNERY O'CONNOR
Introduction by Hermione Lee *Faber* £2.95

Flannery O'Connor's *oeuvre* was a small one: two novels and two volumes of short stories, one of which was still in preparation at the time of her death in 1964, plus a posthumous collection of occasional prose. Severe physical disabilities allowed her to work only at a very slow pace: 'the four hour week'. It is not only the modest output which has prevented wide acclaim from reaching her work in Britain, however, but the labels which have been attached to her and which she made little effort to remove. She was a writer with 'certain preoccupations': a Catholic Southerner for whom 'the ultimate reality . . . the present reality is the Incarnation', a regional writer, the author of 'grotesque' fiction.

Such labelling is, as usual, unfortunate since no single point of entry into her work permits a full exploration of its complexity. Writing of her region was for her a natural extension of exploring the self, 'through the darkness of a familiar world', and it is as irrelevant to associate 'regional' with 'provincial' in her case as it is in Faulkner's. Catholic and anti-humanist her work may be, but the sharpness of her writing cuts deeper into human meanness and pride than any dogma. Freedom, she wrote, 'cannot be conceived simply'; no more so for the humanist, one might plead, than for a firm believer such as her.

Wise Blood certainly cannot be conceived, or even understood, simply. The struggle with freedom which it dramatises is indeed of a grotesque nature. Hazel Motes, grandson of a preacher who carried Jesus 'hidden in his head like a stinger', is released from the armed services and returns to the Deep South where he founds The Church Without Christ. 'Do you think I believe in Jesus?' he suddenly asks the woman sitting opposite on the train which is taking him back home. 'Well I wouldn't even if He existed. Even if He was on this train.' In a 'poisonous Eastern voice' the woman replies: 'Who said you had to?' That 'poisonous' is important. The question implies that for her there exists a kind of freedom which is simply conceived. In the theocracy of Flannery O'Connor it also suggests that her pride will eventually damn her. Haze, however, draws back when she speaks. For him, the fact of non-belief is a matter of life and death. It is what leads him eventually to fill his shoes with rocks in order 'to pay', to wrap barbed wire round his chest because 'I'm not clean', and to blind himself with lime because 'if there's no bottom in your eyes they hold more'. The agnostic reader may struggle to slot Haze's terrible passage into some acceptable allegory or to find a way of

blending sympathy with revulsion. It is not easy to do. Hazel Motes means business.

Yet O'Connor's violence is almost always native to the story and to her characters' lives, and is delivered with a dry humour which is her most attractive trait. Only rarely does she seem more a Catholic than a novelist. In *The Violent Bear It Away*, her other novel, the violent irony of making the ugly little orphan murderer, Tarwater, a prophet seemed to me tiresomely predictable, and her normally spare, clean prose becomes in this book self-consciously scripture ridden:

He knew that he could not turn back now. He knew that his destiny forced him on to a final revelation. His scorched eyes no longer looked hollow or as if they were meant only to guide him forward. They looked as if, touched with a coal like the lips of the prophet, they would never be used for ordinary sights again.

My cold response to *The Violent Bear It Away* may be the result of reading first what was in fact a later version of it, written in the form of a short story. 'The Lame Shall Enter First', one of the best stories in *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, has the do-good reformatory counsellor, Sheppard, trying to help a delinquent boy who claims that Satan has made him criminal — to which Sheppard replies, 'Rubbish! We're living in the space age!' This attitude, reminiscent of the woman on the train asking Haze why he should think he had to believe in Christ, condemns Sheppard immediately in our eyes. But I admit that I moved to condemn him only because I knew that that was what O'Connor wished me to do. In fact, as Paul Bailey states in his Introduction to *The Violent Bear It Away* (all three introductions are excellent and, like the best of their kind, should not be read until afterwards) this character is actually sympathetic and pitiable rather than diabolic.

That is not true of all her victims. The smug Mrs May, for example, in 'Greeneleaf' who reviles her workers and invents goodness in her awful sons; she orders a stray bull to be shot but is gored by it instead and dies whispering 'some last discovery in the animal's ear'. Or the dramatically sensitive Asbury in 'An Enduring Chill'; he is determined to die in order to punish his mother and he hates the doctor who saves him.

It is difficult to convey how well written these stories are. Flannery O'Connor is able to present a character in the time that it takes to coin an image or to reveal a secret smug thought. Her prose is economical and vivid, her ear for Southern speech faultless. Her use of grotesque detail is rarely strained, for she discovers it in the quotidian. 'We are all grotesque.' She said it.

Ron Butlin

Once Upon a Time

The bannisters slide up through the rain.
She cannot hold on — her body slips
backwards
into the waterfall.

We struggle upstairs separately
to a broken skylight, a single-bar fire
and damp sheets.

Once upon a time I carried her all
the way to the top
— now she clutches at falling water
to pull herself up.

New Statesman 7 November 1980

Hugh Brogan

Most Powerful Man

(as it turns out, Ronald Reagan)

The Pulse of Politics: Electing Presidents in the Media Age by JAMES DAVID BARBER
Norton £8.95

All Things To All Men: The False Promise of the Modern American Presidency by GODFREY HODGSON
Weidenfeld £8.95

As the Presidency of the United States declines in prestige and effectiveness, so books about it multiply. Fascination with the institution, born of its age of vigour, survives into the age of decay. It is reinforced by an increasing anxiety to discover what has gone wrong and to suggest remedies. The two books under review both illustrate the point perfectly, if in very different ways. Both are worth reading. If neither, in the last assessment, is entirely satisfying that is chiefly because their common subject is so recalcitrant, even to reason, humour and good will.

James David Barber is less interested in the Presidency than in its interaction with the press and television. In his college days he decided that the people's choice of Presidents was 'diverted and distorted by the myths of modern journalism', and now, a decade or two later, he has tried to substantiate this view. His book comes in two parts (a fact he has tried to disguise by some tricky work with the arrangement of his chapters). One is

an entertaining, gossipy account of twelve 20th-century Presidential elections and what the reporters made of them; the other is an ill-judged attempt to expand an amusing idea, which would have made an agreeable article in *Harper's* or the *Atlantic Monthly*, into matter for a treatise. Nevertheless it must be admitted that his notion is much the best thing in his book. His biographies of campaigns contain little that is new; his theory gives one something to argue about.

Presidential elections, he suggests, come in runs of three. First is the 'fighting' election, when the people (or their intermediaries, the journalists) want the candidates to have a slugging match, to denounce evil and promise paradise. Four years later, the note will be a lofty one: the appeal is to conscience and unity, and woe betide the candidate who threatens consensus, like Adlai Stevenson in 1956, by raising divisive issues. After four more years things will have gone so badly wrong that the voters will be frightened: prudent candidates will assure them that, in spite of appearances, the ancient verities still hold good. By next time the people will have had enough of soft soap; will demand a thorough cleansing of the temple; so the cycle will start once more with another fighting election.

THIS WEEK

Philip Larkin on Tennyson

*

Edmund Wilson in the Thirties

*

The Art and Politics of Science Fiction

Pissarro, Doctorow, Dennis Potter

The Rape of the Lock

The Provok'd Wife



Every Friday 40p

This notion won't do as serious history. It can neither be verified nor falsified, because, first, only much pushing and pulling can fit the events of any election into the pattern, and, second, any election can, if you are set on it, be thus manipulated. For instance, by the time this review appears, readers will know who the next President is to be. According to the Barber thesis, he should be Ronald Reagan, since this is a year for reassurance, and, while Reagan has done his utmost to be conciliating, Jimmy Carter has fought a mean, aggressive campaign. But even if Reagan wins, this will not prove Mr Barber right, since other hypotheses might account for the event equally well; while if he loses Mr Barber will be able to say that it is because he wasn't conciliatory enough, and that Jimmy Carter was.

At a less speculative level, Mr Barber is more convincing: he tells good stories and ends his book with a little homily to the media, counselling them against lending their authority to the wild promises candidates make, which raise expectations dangerously. In this way his argument supports that of Godfrey Hodgson. Not that Mr Hodgson needs such help. His is the weightier book.

Mr Barber nudges a reader into reflection on the nature of the electoral cycle; Mr Hodgson sweeps him into a survey of all the difficulties confronting a modern President, and paints such a devastating picture of Presidential isolation and impotence that I am tempted to wonder if it makes much difference who gets elected this year. For example, Mr Hodgson argues that America does not have real bureaucracy but, thanks to Franklin



Roosevelt:

an inspired mishmash of programs, agencies, bureaux, and free-lance troubleshooters slapped together with knowing carelessness precisely so that they would not display the systematic tenacity of a true bureaucracy.

So far so good, we may think, remembering the way in which the Treasury has strangled so many creative impulses in British government. But the price paid for the mishmash is now unacceptably high. The pseudo-bureaucracy, for sheer lack of organisation, is appallingly unapt to deliver the goods — any goods — and is yet impossible to cut down, for its jungle of subdivisions has become symbiotically entangled with the Congressional jungle of sub-committees and, of course, the multiplicity of special interests seeking special favours. Presidents begin by hoping to use the executive to give America good government; they end by trying desperately to assert control so that at least their nominal subordinates will not wilfully jeopardise their chances of re-election.

So I think it unlikely that Ronald Reagan, if elected, will be able to abolish Medicare or invade the Republic of Panama. I am less happy at the thought that his may be the finger with power to press the button — will he understand that as Lyndon Johnson remarked, 'the only power I've got is nuclear, and I can't use that'? But the present state of affairs is not much less dangerous than a Reagan Presidency might be. Mr Hodgson's most chilling story of Presidential impotence concerns the missile crisis of 1962. In spite of explicit orders from President Kennedy, the US Air Force let a spy plane enter the Soviet Union on a mission, a plane which might have been mistaken for a nuclear bomber (one thinks of *Dr Strangelove*). And again in spite of orders, American planes in the south-east were left lined up, wing-tip to wing-tip (one thinks of Pearl Harbour). Only by chance was the Air Force's intention to bomb Cuba discovered and countermanded. Meanwhile the Navy muffed part of the blockade and, without orders, harried Soviet submarines. Fortunately the toughness and intelligence of the Kennedy brothers and their advisers carried the day for reason; but how can we be sure that there will be such a happy outcome

next time?

Mr Hodgson is right, then, to worry about the Presidency; but I doubt the sufficiency of the reforms he proposes. A single six-year Presidential term, a cabinet council composed of the President and the Congressional leaders of his party — these are admirable suggestions; but I'm not convinced they go far enough. The fundamental problem lies in the fact that the Americans have come to expect far too much of the Presidency, and to ask far too little of themselves. I am not among those who feel surprised that the system produced two such candidates as Reagan and Carter. Reagan is the only sort of candidate that Republicans have really liked since they turned their backs on Theodore Roosevelt. Carter, except for being a Southerner, is standard issue: fiercely ambitious, impressively intelligent and hard-working, tolerably upright, sincerely well-intentioned, and with only the shallowest understanding of the world he works in. But is it his fault if he feels that he must tell the people both what they need to know and what they want to hear?

The complexity of American life is now so great, its decentralisation so complete, that to try to exercise political leadership is like trying to swim in liquid cement. Before long, it may be, the President's chief role will be that of a mere scapegoat, to be cast into the wilderness, every four years, for the sins of the electorate. A six-year term might save his pride, but it would not necessarily educate the people. Not until they rouse themselves to tackle their own political fragmentation, having realised that what Richard Hofstadter called the 'harmonious system of mutual frustration' has got quite out of hand, will significant change be accomplished.

Mr Hodgson, a genial spirit, thinks that Americans may yet rouse themselves. Certainly his book, with its impressive account of malfunctioning, should help to clear the minds of any US citizens who read it; and if it makes any British readers think seriously about institutional reform (by which I do *not* mean simply abolishing the House of Lords) it will have more than served its turn. The United States is not the only democracy where passengers can hear sinister sounds coming from under the bonnet.

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Brian Martin

Slave Coast

The Viceroy of Ouidah by BRUCE CHATWIN
Cape £5.95

The midwife of this book turns out to be the Benin army which arrested the author, took his money and threw him out of the Marxist-Leninist state on suspicion of being a mercenary. This gave him insufficient time to complete his researches for a biography of the early 19th-century slave-trader Francisco Felix de Souza, and so *The Viceroy of Ouidah* is an imaginative reconstruction of his life. Chatwin calls his fictional tragic hero Francisco Manoel da Silva and, in the process of telling his story, is none too complimentary towards Benin's police.

The novel opens as the numerous descendants of Da Silva, the fruit of his profligacy, assemble in 1974 to celebrate the 117th anniversary of his death. Twenty-four-year-old Lt. Colonel Zossoungbo Patrice of the Sûreté Nationale, toting a North Korean sub-machine gun, bans the Requiem Mass and memorial dinner. A very modest cash offer conveniently persuades him that the Da Silvas' festival is consistent with Party ideology, and he allows arrangements to go ahead on condition that the participants listen to the evening's Presidential broadcast. At the book's close he stops 'composing his list of possible traitors' and in the imagery of pure farce (Chaplin posturing Hitler), he paces 'up and down, waving to an imaginary crowd, creaking the floorboards and crushing a cockroach under the heel of his combat boot'. In retrospect, the Benin government might have thought twice and allowed Chatwin to finish his biographical research.

Chatwin's description of the Requiem Mass and dinner is a bizarre delight. The Da Silva tribe gathers from many different parts of the world. Father Olimpio da Silva, priest, intellectual, ethnographer, educated at the Sorbonne, who swivels 'his luminous bronze head with the authority of a gun-turret', conducts the service. He is noted for his qualifying adverbs 'statisquement . . . morphologiquement'. As chicken's blood and feathers together with Gordon's Gin are sprinkled over the grave-shrine beneath Francisco da Silva's antique four-poster, he dismisses the crude mixture of Voodoo rites and Roman Catholic ritual with the remark 'Syncretisme'. Chatwin excels in such vignettes, and in the heavy air of

the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception there is a distinct whiff of Cardinal Pirelli and his eccentricities.

From the present we are transported to the past. Francisco da Silva was born in remote Brazilian scrubland and made his way to the City of all the Saints, Bahia. There he established himself in the slave trade and landed up across the Atlantic at Ouidah on the Slave Coast. 'With the air of a man amazed to find himself in a madhouse', by bartering goods with the King of Dahomey, he acquired slaves and shipped them to the mines and plantations of South America. Within two years Francisco 'sent no less than 45 slave cargoes to Bahia'. Eventually he lost favour with his supplier, found himself imprisoned and dyed in indigo. The King hoped to behead him but it was taboo to take off a white man's head. Sadly for the mad King the dye was not dark enough. His half-brother seized Da Silva and, with his assistance, the Dahomey throne. The new King, surrounded by the skulls of his enemies and the spears of his female warriors, proved madder than his predecessor and 'more frightful than any of his ancestors . . . He made the Atakpameans eat their fathers in a stew'. Francisco was elevated, the King's Viceroy at Ouidah.

The success of Slavery Abolitionists in Britain sent the trade and Da Silva into decline. The ships of the West Africa Squadron, especially when steam frigates hove to in the roads, were superior to the Viceroy's Baltimore clippers sailing at a sharp angle of keel causing hatches to be battened and gratings to be closed; 'cargoes died, from heat, from dysentery and lack of air. Like every self-respecting slaver, he blamed the British.' Internal forces combined with external ones of blockade and arrest to ruin Da Silva. He died outlawed from Brazil: he held no passport. It was the beginning of many long lines of gradually blackening Da Silva generations sinking 'into tropical torpor', but re-emerging annually for the worship of their progenitor and saint.

Chatwin has a gift for remarkably vivid imagery: 'Virgins were broken at Simbodji with the ease of bursting seedpods', and on the way to Dahomey, 'women pointed up a tree to where a crucified man croaked for water in a library of sleeping fruit bats.' Reading Chatwin's descriptions of life in Brazil and West Africa is like reading the early history of Greene-land. It is a sad, barbaric, decadent story told beautifully and brilliantly. Admirers of Conrad and Malcolm Lowry will relish it: and to most palates, it is curiously original, like 'the shock of aguardiente on the tongue'.

The Bride of Lowther Fell by MARGARET FORSTER Secker £6.95

The Bride of Lowther Fell is quasi-Gothic, melodramatic and is sub-titled 'a romance', in case you failed to notice. Told confidently in the first person singular, it is about a single woman, aged 32, called Alexandra Grove — a name, you might suspect, picked straight out of the London A to Z. An air crash leaves her in charge of Casper, her apparently orphaned 13-year-old nephew; but appearances are deceptive. They migrate from Hampstead to Lowther Fell. Then the fun begins.

Social values are inverted and invite their own ridicule. Alexandra, self-confessedly 'a creature of my times,' refits Casper at Colts in

Hampstead High Street, exchanges her racy MGB for a rugged, bright scarlet Range Rover and makes the boy an allowance of £10 a week. She has kept up with the Joneses of contemporary taste by being at the opening of a Stoppard play. She stresses twice, what seems to be an obsession, that men do not appreciate 'that women can find looking at the male body as pleasurably erotic as they find looking at the female'.

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Nicholas Shrimpton

Cold Feet in Moscow

Winter Garden by BERYL BAINBRIDGE *Duckworth* £5.95

Ancestral Vices by TOM SHARPE *Secker* £6.50

Waiting For The Barbarians by J. M. COETZEE *Secker* £5.95

The Past by NEIL JORDAN *Cape* £6.50

In the days when politicians were still prepared to admit that they didn't understand things, Churchill described Russia as 'a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma'. Beryl Bainbridge seems to share his sense of bafflement. Her new novel, *Winter Garden*, offers an almost ostentatiously enigmatic account of an English visit to Moscow. Douglas and Nina and Bernard and Enid set off, as guests of the Soviet Artists' Union, for what should be a routine round of studios and galleries. By the end of the book they, and the reader, are deep in a sinister fog of misunderstanding and ambiguity.

The ground is prepared for this tragicomic mystery in a singularly brilliant opening chapter. Douglas, a middle-aged Admiralty lawyer, has persuaded his wife that he's going on a solitary fishing trip to Scotland rather than an adulterous jaunt to Russia with the glamorous Nina St Clair. On the day of the departure, racked with guilt, he pads about the marital bedroom seeking an excuse for not going after all. But since it's very early in the morning and his wife wants only to get back to sleep, he's obliged to pick up his suitcase and leave. On the way he goes into the kitchen to say goodbye to the dog. 'The dog, lying on its horse-blanket beneath the radiator, ignored him.'

Such eagle-eyed domestic perception, and such mordant comedy, are vintage Bainbridge and they serve a more than merely local purpose. Douglas is immediately established as one of the most innocent innocents-abroad in the whole of literary history. Supposedly the practical man of the party, he proves to be infinitely less worldly than his artistic companions; supposedly a sophisticated philanderer, he is doomed to perpetual discomfort and disappointment. Above all, the fact that he doesn't know quite what's going on even in his own kitchen prepares us for the truly hopeless bewilderment into which he is plunged in foreign parts.

Mind you, he's not the only one to be puzzled by the events in *Winter Garden*. Within 24 hours of their arrival in Moscow, Nina vanishes and there seem to be three possible explanations of what has happened to her. The first (the lurid version) is that she is a KGB agent returning to base and luring the Admiralty innocent with her. A lot of Russian officials seem to have known her in London and, for all the talk of her

going to a sanatorium, the well-informed Bernard insists that 'She's not actually ill, you know. There's an explanation.' The second possibility is that she really is ill (she has certainly given Douglas a recent dose of VD) and is receiving treatment. And the third explanation is that, ill or not, she has had cold feet about the trip and the affair with Douglas, and has gone straight back to London. Her embarrassed hosts concoct the story about a sanatorium. Douglas's overheated imagination supplies the sense of skulduggery.

But in the end what matters is less the precise interpretation of these indistinct events than a recognition of the effect which they have on Douglas. *Winter Garden*, like so much of Beryl Bainbridge's work, is really about love, and love provokes Douglas to an imaginative (at times even psychic) sensitivity of which so stolid a character might seem to be incapable. Half way through the trip Douglas suddenly awakens to the potency of abstract ideas. By the penultimate chapter Bernard and Enid are treating him as a kind of holy fool, an ennobled martyr to the power of Venus.

This is not to say that the novel recommends love in any simple or sentimental way. On the final page Douglas has a vision of 'a man and a woman in a bleak landscape, frozen in their tracks' and the image is linked with the previous ironic description of his sterile back yard as a 'winter garden'. Love, it seems, requires 'an understanding of eternal regret' and its landscape is accordingly a cold one. Even the immediate experience of passion is implicitly paralleled with the disorientating experience of being ill in a foreign country, a sensation which Beryl Bainbridge evokes with great power. Such statements of theme are sometimes a trifle too laconic and I would have welcomed a few more signposts amidst this pea-souper of a plot. But there are perceptions and suggestions here which go a long way towards reconciling one to the book's difficulties.

The consciousness of 'life's contradictions', with which *Winter Garden* ends, also surfaces in Tom Sharpe's *Ancestral Vices*. As one might expect, the effect in this case is rather different. Sharpe's central character, Walden Yapp, is an opinionated know-all who teaches 'Demotic Historiography' at a plate-glass university and reduces all experience to the frigid orthodoxies of Marxist sociological jargon. But some experiences are more easily subdued than others. Sitting in the cells, awaiting a life sentence on a false charge of murdering a dwarf in order the more easily to enjoy improper intimacies with his mentally sub-normal wife, Yapp is gripped by a terrifying sense that his ideological moorings are coming adrift. Perhaps what has happened is merely a mistake? 'Anything was better than that, and if he were to allow himself to be seduced by the random and chaotic nature of existence he would lose the assurance, fostered so carefully over the years, that history was imbued with purpose, and that the happiness of mankind was ultimately guaranteed.'

This grotesque moment is as close as *Ancestral Vices* ever comes to seriousness, but one should not presume from it that the book is a right-wing attack on socialist theorising. Sharpe's satire is astonishingly, at times almost worryingly, even-handed. At one moment he's laying into lefty academics; at the next, with equal enthusiasm, he's berating big business and the aristocracy. Occasionally he comes close to direct contradiction. The legal system, for example, is depicted as a monstrous fix, yet

the prisons somehow prove to be full of just the right people — sadistic gorillas who like nothing better than beating up a bleeding-heart reformer. The truth is that everything is grist to Mr Sharpe's comic mill and he doesn't believe in thinking too hard about his raw material before he tosses it in.

What results is another bawdy and brutal romp of the kind which he does so well. If you like jokes about dwarfs called 'Little Willy' and chefs who mishear the first consonant of an order for sucking pig, then you'll lap it up. There's an interesting attempt to establish the verb 'to thorpe' (to decline to give evidence at one's own trial) in the English language. But on the whole Tom Sharpe's conception of the still sad music of humanity is a protracted Bronx cheer and he plays it loud and long.

J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting For The Barbarians* could hardly be more different — a grimly thoughtful book, impelled by a coherent *saeva indignatio*. Set in an imaginary colonial territory vaguely reminiscent of the North West Frontier, this is actually an allegory of recent events in Southern Africa. The hero is a humane minor official who worries about his relationship with the imperial state of which he is part. When a brutal colonel from the 'Third Bureau' arrives to start torturing native suspects, the sense of involuntary complicity becomes intolerable.

A platonic love affair with a native girl deepens his sympathy for the subject peoples and prompts a reconsideration of the concept of barbarism. Eventually, after a long trip into the desert, he returns to find himself an enemy of the state. Thereafter events can be read either as a retrospective account of the end of empire in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, or as a covert prophecy for the future of South Africa itself. Once the penny's dropped, of course, historical allegory of this kind can seem a little dull — a matter of ticking off fictional events against their literal counterparts. But if you are interested in the region (and who can not be?) *Waiting For The Barbarians* provides an intriguing sidelight on its continuing agony.

Contrary to popular opinion, the most dangerous drug for Irish writers does not come out of a Jamieson's bottle or a Guinness vat. Its name is nostalgia and Neil Jordan appears to have written *The Past* while suffering from a massive overdose. His narrative starts with that most hackneyed of *madeleines*, the contemplation of an Edwardian photograph, and then (to change the metaphor) gallops recklessly into a positive knackers' yard of old Hibernian clichés. Amidst the peat smoke and sea drift we're told an unlikely version of the story about the young man searching for his father. He couldn't find him quick enough for me.

Among this week's contributors:

COLIN BUNDY teaches and researches in Oxford. His *Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* was published last year.

JAMES CAMPBELL edits the *New Edinburgh Review*.

HUGH BROGAN lectures in US history at the University of Essex.

BRIAN MARTIN teaches at Pembroke College, Oxford, and is the author of *John Keble: Priest, Professor and Poet*.

MAURICE YAFFÉ is senior clinical psychologist at Guy's Hospital, London, and editor of *The Influence of Pornography on Behaviour* to be published shortly by the Academic Press.

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Age of Consent

O'Carroll's central thesis is that 'body pleasure' in early life is important for the development of a healthy expression of sexuality in adulthood and that one valid way for a child to experience sexual pleasure is with an adult partner. He contends that pre-pubertal children can and do behave sexually when given permission by adults, that they are fully capable of orgasmic release and — among older ones — vaginal and anal intercourse; in other words, he says, socio-cultural proscription governs the expression of childhood sexuality rather than physical restriction. He supports consensual paedophilic acts, which pre-suppose, he believes, 'a

According to O'Carroll, members of the PIE, which started in 1974, have adopted an

It is a pity that O'Carroll chose to focus principally on men-boy interactions (men-girl ones are much more common), and not to discuss at all the practice of incestuous paedophilia which he also endorses, especially as the incidence of this particular behaviour is far more extensive in the community than early studies led us to believe. He concludes that 'families which deny children their sexual life, including the possibility of sexual contact with adults, are profoundly limited, however good they may be in other respects'. Despite the forceful presentation of his radical case O'Carroll has failed to convince at least one adult who does not have an active paedophiliac interest that children can negotiate with adults on equal terms about intimate physical activities, or indeed that these are acceptable and appropriate practices in our society. He describes in positive terms the present Dutch situation regarding paedophilia, where consensual activity is generally excused or tolerated. But his expensive book is unlikely to lead us in the same questionable direction.

Dream Of Waking

My words dream that they wake and,
 sleeping, try
And Fail to open unbelieving eyes
I walked all night and in the blue-grey dawn
Saw gas-jets burning on the grey-green lawn
While on the balconies the flasks of sky
Cracked open as the night began to die
I saw the blackbirds throwing themselves
 down
Theatrically moaning on the ground
A cat devoured her litter out of fright
To save them, hoping time would prove her
 right
The tails of lizards whistled through the air
Like arrows tipped with greed and pure despair
A beetle fizzed unsteadily past my ear
Stinking inside his military gear
I'm such a fool! At last I got the point
No wonder I'd been feeling out of joint
This morning was no morning and this dawn
No dawn, I had been tricked, used like a pawn
And as I stood there in the perfumed air
I felt the darkness welling everywhere
I woke and my suspicions were confirmed
Dead night, night of corruption and the worm

Potter: Up from the Pit

DENNIS POTTER's most recent television plays (LWT) have been complemented by a retrospective showing of his oeuvre at the NFT. STUART HOOD and JULIAN BARNES discuss the work of arguably our most important television dramatist.

1. Potter, Pasolini & Poujade

The policy of the British Film Institute with regard to television has recently been defined as 'to give television a memory'. By placing selected television programmes in its archives the Institute has already done something to counter the effects of that wholesale junking of material which has made it virtually impossible, for example, to study the history and development of British television drama because the bulk of the texts — in the shape of film and video recordings — have been destroyed. Fortunately, of the corpus of plays written for television by Dennis Potter only four no longer exist. It was therefore possible for the National Film Theatre, consonant with the BFI's stated policy, to mount a retrospective of Potter's work and thus provide an opportunity to assess a writer remarkable for his sustained brilliance and for the fact that he has (so far) remained true to his chosen medium. If that medium is television, it is, as he explained in a *Guardian* lecture at the NFT, for two reasons: firstly, because he believes that television with its great audience is an important medium and, secondly, because television presents the writer with a challenge — the challenge being to produce work of such interest that it will reach that audience in spite of all the domestic distractions with which any programme on the small screen has to contend. That challenge Potter readily accepts.

As a television dramatist Potter enjoyed the immense advantage of writing his first plays in the mid-Sixties for James MacTaggart, one of the most original and adventurous minds in British television, a director and producer who was convinced of the need to break out of the narrow conventions of television as they existed then — and, indeed, as they for the most part exist today. It was a genre wedded to naturalism, conventional in its narrative structures, restricted (for good and bad reasons, which were mainly technical) in its ability to open out a scene and, above all, resistant to attempts to expand the limit of the medium. This was a period when the grammar of television production was codified in such terms as a 'picture without a sound is dead and unpleasing' or 'only pan with a moving person or object' because a moving camera 'draws attention to itself . . . and distracts the mind of the audience'.

Potter's work bears the mark of James MacTaggart's thinking in its freedom from conventional shackles and in its adventurous techniques. It was difficult, however, to determine from Potter's remarks during his *Guardian* lecture to what extent he feels responsible

for the visual style of his plays. There were indications that he is content to leave visuals to the director and would not, for example, claim credit for the long travelling shots which give fluidity to the camerawork and direction of Ernest Vincze and Gavin Millar respectively in one of his latest works, *Cream in My Coffee*. Nor would he presumably claim responsibility for the opening sequence of an early play, *Where the Buffalo Roam*, in which to the sound of Western music and gun-play from television sets behind drawn blinds an amorphous piece of paper drifts through the empty Cardiff streets and seems to quiver and crumple with every shot. But some things are implicit in his scripts: the mix-through from normal diegesis — a scene in an Oxford quad — to the silvery wonderland of Alice in his early play about Dodgson and his nymphets or, more strikingly, the jump-cuts from the hero of *Where the Buffalo Roam* in his everyday clothes and humdrum surroundings to the same boy as a fast-on-the-draw gunman in the Western saloons of his fantasy.

The disjunctive style of *Where the Buffalo Roam* is one that recurs in Potter's work. Its manner of juxtaposing reality and dreams, hallucinations and fantasies is admirably suited for the portrayal of typical Potter figures such as the schizophrenic actor, pursued down *The Yellow Brick Road* by television cameras, or the wife-deserted, drink-sodden scriptwriter with his fantasy of a visiting angel in *Only Make Believe*. It is a style of writing which allows, indeed dictates a certain kind of direction involving ellipses in space and time, shifts of point of view, paradoxes about reality and our perception of it. It includes shots which Potter would perhaps not relish hearing described as Brechtian but which are in fact truly 'alienating', as when the devil in *Brimstone and Treacle* speaks directly to camera in a manner which Frankie Howerd has made his own in farce. It is a style, too, which lends itself to the handling of the supernatural, if that is the correct word to apply to the epiphanies which are such a noticeable element in his work from the Italian bear-keeper setting the village folk of Potter's Forest of Dean by the ears in a *Beast with Two Backs*, to the angel stripping off for a frustrated suburban housewife in *Only Make Believe* to reveal that he has no wings, the devil in *Brimstone and Treacle* who by his sexual powers returns a disabled girl to sordid reality, or the messenger in *Blade on the Feather* who brings retribution to the wicked Red don, recruiter of Burgess, Maclean and others.

This is an aspect of his work which asks to be compared with Pasolini — not that he makes the demand himself explicitly. Potter's *Son of Man* has an angry Jesus to put alongside Pasolini's wild man from the wilderness in his *Gospel According to St Matthew*. *Only Make Believe* and *Brimstone and Treacle* in their own

way invite comparison with Pasolini's *Theorem* although there is a coolness about the latter which distances it from the hobgoblin antics of the devil that proved too strong for the stomachs of BBC officialdom. If Pasolini emerges as the more interesting of the two it is because his films have a quality derived from the fact that he both wrote and directed them with a strong visual imagination which imprints shots and images in the memory of the viewer. Potter admittedly gives more opportunities to his directors than most TV writers; but there is nothing in his plays to set beside the astonishing scene in *Theorem* where the peasant girl levitates after her encounter with the angel or that in which the bourgeois father stalks naked across a Dantesque waste of lava and black sand. If Potter goes on to make feature films we may perhaps see him instigate images with the same order of power.

But while his latest work is film first and television second, it does not mark an exciting advance in his career. *Cream in My Coffee*, in which an elderly couple revisit the scene of a youthful sexual escapade, is stylish, but, for all its slipping about in time and space and its strong cast, is less interesting than some of his earlier evocations of lost Edens and of the anguish of that loss. *Blade on the Feather* is a piece of *grand guignol* with again a great concern for style and location. Its main interest is the way in which it illuminates some of the strands of thought which Potter expressed in his *Guardian* lecture. Thus Donald Pleasance as the elderly traitor may be seen as bodying forth Potter's conviction that anyone who clings to radical politics after his salad days is doomed to a life of falsehood and demoralisation. Of this the don is an exemplary case. He is also a convenient target for some of Potter's pet hates for he is at once a somewhat lapsed Marxist and a member of the upper and landed classes, a frightened sham of a man who pleads for life when the exterminating angel from the Party arrives in the shape of Tom Conti. This sort of conflation is paralleled only by that to be found in writers like John Buchan who saw in the Jew at once the all-powerful financier and the blood-dripping Bolshevik. In political terms these are curious and dangerous combinations to which — casting about for a term — one might give the label of intellectual Poujadism.

For it is between the poles of radicalism and conservatism that Potter oscillates in both his public statements and his plays. He is a man of dualities, of Manichaean polarities, whose dilemma was illustrated by a piece of no doubt unconscious planning when the NFT showed on the same evening *Between the Rivers*, a documentary on Potter's native Forest of Dean narrated by himself, plus *A Beast with Two Backs*, a play set in the same locality some time in the last century. In the documentary we were presented with a community imbued with all the social virtues and inspired by a rugged individualism which prefers work in pit-shafts, under conditions that any union would rightly condemn, to work in a collective — in a factory. In the play the ancestors of these same people are displayed as cruel, lustful, ignorant, violent. Perhaps Eden never existed, perhaps the world is full of treachery, filth and despair as one part of Potter seems to see it. Such a tension in the spirit produces good plays but bad models for human society which, even at its worst, throws up individuals and groups capable of kindness, solidarity, comradeship and love.

Stuart Hood

2. Not for Laying Down

William Rees-Mogg recently outlined the advantage his *Times* consortium would have over the Thomson Organisation: 'No money.' At the risk of sounding Thatcherish, I couldn't help wondering at the end of the three-week Dennis Potter season (LWT) whether what he and producer Kenith Trodd need most isn't a large dose of austerity.

All three films were filled with the sound of money singing — sometimes unmetaphorically, as when crooner Martin Shaw eased his way through some Thirties classics in *Cream in My Coffee* to the pattering, white-gloved applause of scores of swallow-tailed extras. But what — apart from leading one into false nostalgias — was all the production gloss doing there? *Cream in My Coffee* was essentially a small-scale, wistful, slightly aching play: it followed Bernard and Jean, an elderly couple *à la recherche* in the south-coast Grand Hotel where, 40 years earlier, they had jumped the gun on their wedding. It was a bit of Alan Bennett country, really, as the pair — she mousy and oppressed, he bullying and irascible — searched vaguely for a departed world and bickered at its replacement. A secret from the past slowly emerged; Bernard's apprehensions of mortality were sketched in, then roundly fulfilled; and it all added up to an hour's worth at most.

But no: for that fatal, money-spinning cry which has been echoing through television for some years now had already gone out: Bring On the Vintage Cars. Which they duly did, rolling them out of the *Pennies From Heaven* garage. And bring on the string trio while you're about it — they can play 'Red Sails in the Sunset' (and we can counterpoint it cutely with 'Yesterday' on a modern trio — two electric guitars and an organ). Oh, and hire some of those formation people — they know all the old dances. As yet another chamouised roadster purred to a halt, one formulated an odd complaint against Potter: too much for the eye, not enough for the mind.

All three films announced their themes without delay. *Blade on the Feather* opened with a distant, posh-voiced tennis cry of 'Oh, stop cheating' (leading to upper-class treachery, the Fifth Man, etc). *Rain on the Roof* opened with an anonymous hand bathing its bloodied palm in a stream of water (leading to more Christian symbols and Old Testament vengeance). *Cream in My Coffee* opened with Lionel Jeffries muttering 'That's the same, that's the same' as he checked in to the hotel (leading to the discovery that it was all the same, but also, horribly, wasn't). All three plots ended, rather inevitably, in Death — a subject Dennis Potter always treats as if he were the person who first thought of it.

If *Cream* was Bennettish, *Blade* was Le Carré out of Pasolini — the only difference from *Theorem* being that Tom Conti (in the Terence Stamp part, and yes, unshaven as well by Day Two) didn't sleep with Donald Pleasance. It was a solidly enjoyable if untaxing country-house thriller of the old school, even down to the sinister butler (Denholm Elliot upstaging hard — but then he can fall off his bike behind a hedge and still upstage an entire woodland); while corny proleptic thunderclaps kept pointing us towards the final gunshot. Its Fifth-Man aspect updated it a bit, and so did some lively if

undigested class disgust on Potter's part. The TV critic of the *Listener*, I couldn't help noticing, read the play as being principally an attack on Eton (as institution, too, not even as symbol), and explained helpfully that 'while some Old Etonians may be Marxist traitors, most are not'. No indeed — some even write TV criticism for the *Listener*.

Rain on the Roof was more familiar Potter territory: the disturbance of a morally putrefying middle-class couple by the arrival of an illiterate epileptic bearing a hedgerow Christian message (remember the blind seer by the wayside in *Pennies*?). The husband screwed around the wife gulped tranx and said improbably self-explanatory things like 'I'm a very neurotic woman'. Christian symbols littered the script, and the intruder's toiling struggle with letters was to be read against the husband's careless, decadent betrayal of them (he works in advertising). The trouble was, until Apocalypse Now duly arrived (wreaked by the boy with a shard of greenhouse) it was all too easy not to get involved in the case of the faith-bearing idiot and the disturbed wife; and their interminable literacy lesson brought that familiar cry to the lips of 'Roll on the dinner party'. Dinner parties always work well in TV plays; if only because someone can usually be counted on to hurl the food around.

If Potter were less talented, one would carp less. But he is as erratic as he is talented. He's vaguely classifiable, I suppose, as a Christian socialist with a running edge of apocalyptic disgust. One thing he isn't is a naturalist, and his best play so far, *Blue Remembered Hills*, relied on a carefully controlled heightening of realism. He's more a polemicist than a satirist, for the simple reason that rage disturbs his eye as he gazes on upper-class shits and spies and degenerate admen. Insecure moments of tone inevitably result. In *Blade* we had the snobby daughter Christabel dismissing Tom Conti with a 'Piss off, oik' — just possible to a cheeky gardener, but to a good-looking, well-spoken Old Etonian played by T. Conti? Similarly, in *Rain*, the bullying adman had no sooner punched his wife for romping with the naked hedgerow prophet than he was sitting down with him at a candlelit dinner-party (either a sudden, silent character turnaround had taken place, or Potter cut a vital justifying scene). And the playwright has a strange, half-repelled, half-gloating view of the sexuality of upper-middle-class women. They get their hair pulled, are forcibly kissed, and promptly melt into bed; they are disturbed in the shower and immediately comply; either they are bestially subdued by men or they are neurotically predatory. The sort of world that disgusts Potter — and it's right that it does — is, in terms of realism, better rendered each week by Andrea Newman.

There were, of course, sporadic pleasures to be had from the films — the Thirties revival ball and Bernard's death in *Cream*; the Conti speech about MacDonald's hamburgers in *Blade* — and the acting was dangerously good. Compared with other TV playwrights Potter is a giant (the week's other Trodd-prod, Stephen Poliakoff's *Caught on a Train* (BBC-2), confirmed the point: a road movie, or rather railroad movie, of occasional acuteness, considerable length, and not much centre). But the real measure of comparison should be not with other TV dramatists but with the playwright's own best work; by this standard Potter's 1980 vintage is not for laying down.

Julian Barnes

Music

Andrew Clements

Pastoral

BBC College Concerts Guildhall School of Music

In a perfect world the BBC would have announced the plans for its new season of College Concerts in ample time, and last week's performance of Harrison Birtwistle's *Down by the Greenwood Side* could have been discussed in a neat package with the discs of *Punch and Judy* reviewed here three weeks ago. But the College Concerts are consistently underpromoted; they may be given before an invited audience and recorded for later broadcast, but they now represent the BBC's most significant contribution to the promotion of contemporary music. There are six concerts this winter divided equally between the Guildhall School and the Royal College of Music (neither it must be said very satisfactory concert halls); they contain nine first British performances and two premieres. As the BBC's public concerts, especially in the Festival Hall, move more and more towards the mainstream of the orchestral repertoire the importance of the series increases.

Down by the Greenwood Side was the major attraction of the first programme. It forms in many ways a complement to *Punch and Judy*; both works carry on Birtwistle's highly individual preoccupation with music drama, and explore some of his characteristic obsessions — with regeneration and growth, with the necessity of music to supply what word and gesture cannot manage. Where *Punch and Judy* took over a familiar theatrical genre and provided its own glosses, *Down by the Greenwood Side* (written two years later in 1969) goes back farther into murkier areas of folk legend. Into the structure of a traditional mummers' play, with its clear divisions into ritual set pieces, Michael Nyman's libretto interpolates the elements of a popular ballad, *The Cruel Mother*. A soprano, Mrs Green, sings the ballad; the play is performed by a group of actors and mimes. Birtwistle calls it a 'dramatic pastoral'; his instrumental ensemble recalls the 'cornet, clarinet, big trombone/fiddle, cello, big bass drum/bassoon, flute and euphonium' of the Cornish *Floral Dance*, though he allows himself more percussion.

The result is a strangely beautiful work. Both music and drama are crowded with stark, violent images. Mrs Green's murder of her child returns to a theme presented in *Punch and Judy* and to an image of infanticide that has stayed with the composer since as a child he saw Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*; the opening sequence of children being thrown into a fire was his first experience of film. The fights and repeated murder of St George in the play are carried out to music which recalls *Punch's* killings, but here the violence ritualised in the earlier opera is given a grisly, knockabout humour. One laughs at *Punch and Judy* in a nervous, uncomfortable way; *Down by the Greenwood Side* is honest and earthy, an authentic re-

creation of a folk tradition.

Yet Birtwistle is incapable of writing even the blackest music without including compensating oases of the sweetest lyricism. Early in the work Mrs Green's gentle musings are a delicate foil to the vulgar ostinatos and banal tunes that underpin the play. Later, as she moves towards the killing and her vocal lines become more jagged and disconnected, the music of the play itself, in the two 'cures' that follow the double murder, manages some bewildering beautiful woodwind tracery, the melodic line passed from instrument to instrument in a seamless flow. *Down by the Greenwood Side* is yet further demonstration that Birtwistle, more than any of his contemporaries, understands and has within his creative powers a new evaluation of the relationship between music and verbal gesture and its possibilities.

The semi-staged version of *Down by the Greenwood Side* put on at the Guildhall School was a valuable, vital reminder of the work's quality, but also a frustrating experience. A fully staged version is badly needed (as it is of *Punch and Judy*), based preferably on this performance by the London Sinfonietta, conducted by Richard Pittman with Theresa Cahill as Mrs Green, and a splendidly coarse collection of Northern accents from the National Theatre in the speaking parts.

The first half of the College Concerts contained works by Jacob Druckman — *Animus IV*, for tenor, instrumentalists and pre-recorded tape, and so cosmically embarrassing that it cannot possibly represent the best of this highly regarded American composer — and John Buller. Buller's *The Melian Debate* is a setting of Thucydides from the late 1960s, a work from the period before he achieved a measure of success and regular performances. It seemed disappointingly dry and prosaic; the sensuous sound world of a piece like *Proença*, which made such an impression at the 1977 Proms, was clearly a later and badly needed development.

Opera

Peter Conrad

Magnificent

Lucia di Lammermoor Covent Garden
Arabella Coliseum

Zeffirelli's production of *Lucia* looks dim and tattered, but decrepitude suits its recreation of a foundering, impoverished, aristocratic world, grimly maintaining appearances while trusting to lucrative marriages for relief from its penury. Now discreetly underlit to conceal the damages of two decades, the sets remain funereally grand. Zeffirelli's architectural shapes have decayed into flimsiness (castle walls tend to ripple whenever tickled by an errant draught), leaving behind them only atmosphere — the red gloom in which Enrico despatches his troops to the forest, the gaunt vaulted hall, the Ravenswood tombs.

The score at least has been renovated. The conductor, Jesus Lopez-Cobos, has restored altered keys and rubbed out spurious high

notes interpolated by exhibitionistic coloraturas. Though he led the revival crisply and boldly, his textual corrections found little favour critically. Our reviewers don't like to be lectured to musicologically, and protested that they didn't need to be told that the role of Lucia belonged to a dramatic soprano not a feather-brained canary — hadn't Callas and Sutherland been singers of the required kind?

The new Lucia of Lopez-Cobos, Katia Ricciarelli, got a disgruntled critical reception. I thought her magnificent. Her voice is pale and sad, with sudden shafts of brilliant colour and intense feeling — an instrument perfect for this neurotic character. Her movements are entranced, balletic. Entering the hall to meet her fiancé, she advances beneath a shroud, already more a corpse than a bride. Abused and importuned by men — dragged across the stage to sign the marriage document, cowering on the floor while her brother berates her, flinching from Edgardo's curse — she retreats defensively into herself. During her quarrel with Enrico, Ricciarelli swallows the ends of phrases in sullen, introverted melancholy. Her mad scene isn't the rousing vocal concert Sutherland made it; the absence of applause in the middle of the scene was a tribute to Ricciarelli's rapt performance. The madness of this Lucia is a soliloquy not a succession of vocal stunts. We overhear it, as she thinks she overhears the wedding music playing in her head. Lucia is Aeolian — the flute, like the harp which characterises her mental waywardness in her first scene, exists only in her fantasy, not as the summons to combat by cadenza which it was for Sutherland.

José Carreras, the Edgardo, seemed to have deplaned just in time to slither into those platform-heeled thigh boots on which he always perambulates at Covent Garden, but not in time to acquaint himself with the production. Nevertheless, he sang ardently, even desperately. Paired with Ricciarelli, his gaucherie doesn't matter: they are not indomitable vocal virtuosi archly pretending to act Donizetti's tormented characters, like Sutherland and Pavarotti in 1973; they look and sound like lost, frail, confused young people, driven to musical lament because they can't alter the dramatic reality which persecuted them. She ends in the comfort and freedom of lyrical madness, he in suicide among the family tombs — victims, both, of romantic sensibility in morbid excess.

The characters of *Arabella* are the latter-day, ironic casualties of the operatic past, which fates them to self-parody. Like most of the Strauss and Hofmannsthal collaborations, *Arabella* begins in parodic imitation of the past, as a shabby-genteel *Rosenkavalier*. At times, in its quandary, it seeks refuge in operetta. The coachman's ball of the second act is a festivity like Orlovsky's party in *Fledermaus* where, with the help of Mandryka's consignments of champagne, everyone can be expected to behave operatically. But, contrariwise, *Arabella* also falters modernistically from song into speech. The crises of its actions are managed in dialogue, as if music can no longer be trusted to cope with the necessities of drama. While plaintively adhering to the past (Hofmannsthal urged Strauss to model the music on the operettas of Auber, Boieldieu and Donizetti), *Arabella* ushers in the future. Music's surrender to speech looks ahead to Schönberg's criticism of musical fluency and

meretriciousness in the dialogues between Moses and Aron.

I had expected that Jonathan Miller would explore this quizzical, self-parodying, inadvertently modern quality in his new *Arabella*. But he has contented himself with garish, cheaply opulent sets, expended most of his attention on the supernumerary characters — Mandryka's scruffy gipsy retinue; the insolently lolling waiter who refuses Waldner's credit — and left the principals to fend for themselves. Luckily, they sing so well that they're never in danger. Josephine Barstow lacks the easy vocal rapture of the Strauss soprano. All her effects are conscientious victories over an intractable instrument. But as *Arabella* she succeeds in refining her voice for the meditative passages and in fixing it out for the climaxes of assertion. Peter Glossop is a rough, strenuous Mandryka, good when the music is galloping (as in his description of his estates and his journey to Vienna), at a loss when the character turns naively holy and idealistic, and unable to surmount the orchestral swell. Vocally, the performance belongs to the superb Norma Burrows as Zdenka and to Graham Clark's Matteo, who has to struggle with one of Strauss's cruellest roles — a part which derides the operatic tenor's fatuity yet requires a tenor of Tristanesque valour.

Mark Elder conducts with thrilling energy. A pity Miller's busy schedule didn't allow him to supply the production this musically superior performance deserves.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Domestic Aggro

The Provoked Wife by VANBRUGH *Lyttelton*
The Crucible by ARTHUR MILLER *Cottesloe*

A Restoration comedy which boasts characters called Sir John Brute, Lord Rake and Colonel Bully isn't the place one would expect to find much truth or subtlety, especially when the author is Vanbrugh, who is generally agreed to have possessed an extrovert energy, a spirited wit, but to have lacked the humanity of his younger contemporary, Farquhar. To Peter Wood, however, those expectations and that reputation have served mainly as a challenge. He is an up-to-date director, and up-to-date direction of Restoration comedy consists in finding as much everyday reality as one can (and, sometimes, more than one should) in the characters, their feelings and their environment. Accordingly, the London of his *Provoked Wife* is very evidently enduring the notorious winter of 1683-4, seven years before it was actually written. The cast begins the play by travelling downtown by boat, but is soon skimming on skates across the Thames to its assignations; and, once indoors, it seems to subsist entirely on hot chocolate, which it drinks standing up, sitting down, and slumped across beds. Someone summons a servant, and in he stomps, grumpily scouring a silver pot.

It's the fashionable approach, but not therefore a wrong-headed or unprofitable one. Here's a room with a cosy city view, not just a jewelled proscenium; here, on the whole, are people, not powdered robots crying 'la!'; and here is genuine domestic aggro, not simply an excuse for an elaborately erotic plot. The very first scene, as deftly and amusingly played as anything I've seen at the National, sums up much. John Wood's Brute and Geraldine McEwan's Lady Brute sit sourly over their late-morning cuppas and newspapers. He puts across some of the period's standard animadversions on wives and marriage with a kind of appalled disbelief, by no means unselfcritical in tone: how *could* he have volunteered for a life-sentence in the prison-house with a jailor he seems able only to detest? She responds to his boorishness in a feline purr that barely camouflages contempt. How on earth are they to offload each other?

Vanbrugh's answer to this question is a plot whose longeurs and fatuities a more ordinary production would surely expose. While Lady Brute and her niece Belinda dally with Messrs Constant and Heartfree, Brute himself goes on a prolonged razzle with his cronies, somehow managing to disguise himself as a woman and get arrested in the process. Betterton and then Garrick made these particular scenes their own; but I somehow doubt if either gave them quite the human logic John Wood does now. His Brute is an over-age infant, a scrawny, self-indulgent innocent, hankering for a life of schoolroom japes, good wine on tap, and no responsibilities at all. Unluckily for him, permanent escape proves impossible; and the ending shows him contemplating his conjugal chains with the same wry, wondering hopelessness as the beginning — 'what the plague *did* I marry her for?'

It's quite an achievement to inject a sottish, woozy yet plausible pathos into a character conceived by its author as a comic monster only. It is also an achievement to do stylish, witty things with your larynx and fingers, while not letting your audience forget you're actually a misused, frustrated wife teetering on the brink of adultery; but that's the particular contribution of Miss McEwan, her

voice fluting, fluttering, then spiralling into a compliant wail to Constant, 'oh heavens, let me go — I am lost'. Less can be made of Constant himself, since he's no more than his name numbly proclaims, or of the spectacularly, repetitively affected Lady Fancyfull, who dedicates herself to wrecking the affair burgeoning between Heartfree and Belinda; but Nicky Henson, gulping and puffing with gawky surprise at receiving any encouragement at all, and Dorothy Tutin, narcissistically gasping and palpitating, do what they can to fulfil their director's grand aim, which is to ensure that nature survives the onslaught of art.

Perhaps the result could be funnier. Wood's angular transvestism didn't get its quota of laughter on opening night, though he did better with what the Guinness people should promptly recognise as the longest double-take in theatrical history. His Brute is supposed simply to boot open the tea-cupboard and see the predatory Constant and Heartfree skulking inside: in fact, he takes out a cup, sips, blearily meditates, sips again, frowns, and only then twigs. The production's real achievement, however, is constantly to show us that behind the flauntings and cavortings a serious, even earnest debate is taking place. Given the chronic restlessness of husbands, the ennui of wives, and the mutual swinishness that so often and soon marks the most promising matches, should a sensible man or woman ever submit to wedlock? Vanbrugh asks, re-asks, asks again; and if he doesn't decisively answer, it's partly because he was writing for and about a civilisation as cynical as our own about the possibility of reconciling sex, love and marriage.

Though written in the 1690s, it's a modern enough play; and, though written about the 1690s, *The Crucible* proves no less so. It's Bill Bryden's valedictory production for the Cottesloe, and displays the excellent company he's built up at its most characteristic: plain, unpretentious, rather puritan, and in every way equipped for a play about plain, unpretentious puritans and itself somewhat plain and puritan in texture and tone. Its knotty, sinuous language notwithstanding, *The Crucible* lacks the psychological richness

and ambiguity of Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Equally, inevitably, it lacks the density it might have acquired if it had been written in an age that actually believed in the existence of a metaphysical evil.

Its tale of those who somehow maintain individual integrity after being accused by hysterical girls of witchcraft and sentenced to hang by a credulous court is, of course, much more than a rationalist or humanist tract. On the contrary, it's forceful, riveting and, thanks to the taut, furrowed acting of Mark McManus, Dinah Stabb and others at the Cottesloe, sometimes disturbing as well. It holds as history, yet proves hardly less timely than when Joe McCarthy was on the rampage. Deputy Governor Danforth has sired many children, and they are still telling us that not to be with them is to be against them, still offering us survival at the cost of compromise. *The Crucible* may not exactly resound across the heavens; but it's a play for Chile, Czechoslovakia and, dare one say, Britain itself.

Films

John Coleman

Dreadlocked

Babylon (X) Gate 2; Classic, Chelsea; Ace, Brixton

Diabolo Menthe (AA) Minema

He Knows You're Alone (X) Ritx

The Fog (AA) Classic, Oxford Street; Scene; Odeon, Kensington

Franco Rosso and Martin Stellman wrote the first draft five years ago, for the BBC 'Play for Today' series. Finally, thanks largely to Mamoun Hassan, it became the only film to be financed by the NFFC last year; Gavrik Losey came in as producer and got more money from the Chrysalis group of companies and from Lee Studios; it was shot entirely on location in six

ARTS GUIDE

ONAL HOUSE

NOVEMBER EVENTS

1 & 2 7.30 & 9.30
ENTERTAINMENT MACHINE
 5-9, 12-16 & 19-23 7.30
BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY
 by Sue Jamieson
 5-9 9.30
THAT'S NOT IT
 Devised by Natasha Morgan
 12-16 9.30
DEATH BY KISSING
 a Pure Monkeys Thriller
 20th 9.30
Gabi and Chloe MIME SHOW
 21-23 at 9.30
THE VALENTINE SISTERS in
 Two Women With Hats On
 26-30 7.30
THEATRE MAJA —
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 28-30 9.00
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 CAMDEN WINTER SEASON SERIES

weeks by Chris Menges (*Kes*, *Gumshoe*, *Black Jack*) and directed by Mr Rosso. *Babylon* is a good, disturbing movie, at once raw and accomplished, about a bad, disturbed area of our national life. There is no need to tap it to see that the reading is stormy weather. This realistic fiction offers an experience of a black South London family of sorts as seen largely through the baffled, resentful, arrogant eyes of young Blue (Brinsley Forde), a naturally peaceable drifter who comes most alive when taking the mike and verbally improvising to a reggae beat at dances and 'sound competitions' in back-street clubs. He may sport dreadlocks and spout Rasta-style but he is hardly a religious or political animal. Ganja, the weed, and hugely boosted sound are his relaxations; the lingo and looks are just passwords, cards of identity.

But the world won't let him and his mates alone. He has to turn out of pretty Elaine's bed to see a truant kid brother to school. Ronnie (a fine vignette from Karl Howman) is white, comical and all right, but the day comes when the gang attack Ronnie for playing black. Whitey generally is either fair game (though Blue jibs at a queer-bashing con job pulled in a *Piccadilly alley*) or a threat — Blue is chased by the 'Beast' (police), beaten up and hauled in on sus; an angry white family wreck the sound equipment of his group, Ital Lion, in its lock-up garage hideaway. When a desperate Blue shoves a screwdriver into the race-baiting chief wrecker, it's all up with him, at least, though he races to the club and yells a defiant song — 'Can't take no more of that' — picked up by the crowd as the fuzz finally hammer down the doors.

The blackest of ends, then, but the film has been full of humour as well; sly moments of observation (when chum Lover is hauled, crest-fallen and spruce, to an engagement party, his own; or thick, pugnacious Beefy solemnly walks a dog they call 'alienation' and 'mutant'); even attempts at holding a balance. The abusive wife of that council-flat family has a point when she rails at the nightly noise from that garage; not everyone likes reggae at bedtime. And it's a misguidedly kind white woman who hauls his squirming young brother from Blue, sensing a bully. Blacks, of course, cheat their fellows like mad throughout. Here at least we have common ground. Do go and see *Babylon*. It is infernally loud, subtitled less than it might be, not always well acted, but it is vibrant, busy, painful, provocative and *there*.

Diane Kurys's very attractive first feature, *Diabolo Menthe*, made three years ago, is set autobiographically back in 1963 and covers a school year in Paris. Thirteen-year-old Anna Weber (solemn-faced Eléonore Klarwein) looks bemusedly up to her 15-year-old sister Frédérique (Odile Michel) who has a boyfriend, political opinions, and a special relationship with their divorced mother. Life at the *lycée* is deftly sketched in. The teachers are the usual rum bunch, sadistic, feeble, unaware. One switches allegiances with friends in a cloud of unknowing. The arrival of Anne's curse is greeted by traditional but startling slaps from mama; big sister scores in the school play; alarming nonsenses about sex are divulged by po-faced little monsters. Dimmish papa has the girls for the hols, embarrasses them acutely by swooping down one day to take them out to lunch when he Tells a Joke. Nothing much more serious happens than everything, beneath an animated surface. That Truffaut, among others, has been hereabouts before and more resonantly is acknowledged in a backward-

glancing freeze-frame of Anne, like Antoine but unlike, *au bord de la mer*.

Of two items from the current flood of horrorpox Armand Mastroianni's unheralded *He Knows You're Alone* may well be the better. It has a frequently sparky script by Scott Parker and is performed with agreeable attack by everyone except the leading actress and a hopeless fellow playing an avenging cop called Len whose fiancée was murdered on their wedding day-to-be. We see the knife-wielding maniac quite early on (*such a good idea I always think*) and he does in fact upset the story's premises by killing college girls with anything *but* wedlock on their naughty minds. The film, whether intentionally or not is no great matter, constantly deflates our orgasmic expectations by having cubicle curtains whipped open by friendly hands, showers taken unscathed and so on. But fret not — blood and *Psycho*-screesches on the sound-track there are, aplenty. There are some five squelchy-nasty murders in *The Fog*, to get to the meat of things. John Carpenter, however, will surely be found off form this time round by those legions who delighted in *Halloween*. The affair, which certainly has some very well-directed fog, and hinges on the centennial return of a sextet of ghost lepers, never quite recovers from a prologue with the late, splendid John Houseman spinning a nocturnal yarn to campfire kiddies.

Weekend Competition

No 2642

Set by Ms de Meaner

A new edition of the *Penguin Dictionary of Modern Quotations* is to be published on 20 November (Allen Lane £8.95/Penguin £2.50). To mark this event Penguin have very kindly donated a number of paperback copies to the Complex to be awarded to those compers who can produce the most apt quotations ready for the *next* edition. You're asked to invent single-sentence quotes which *ought* to be forthcoming during the Eighties from British politicians, film actors or novelists. The obvious (e.g. anything from Maggie about U-turns) will be fed into the shredder straightaway. Max. ten goes each. Closing date 21 November.

No 2639

Set by E.O. Parrott

Betjeman on the punk scene.

Report

By Mercy Dash

It's a shame we can't give you all prizes. We had masses of stirringly Betjemanesque verses, many of them showing real empathy for the finer feelings that simmer in the breast of the average punk — or the average punk's mum. The remaining Rochesters to Bill Greenwell and Stanley J. and eight quid to the rest of you printed.

Miss Sharon L. Speke, Miss Sharon L. Speke, Tarnished and varnished, with pins in your cheek, We carved our initials that first time we met, You with your cut-throat, and I my Gillette.

How tiring, inspiring! My love, I was numb, I was drained when you tenderly bit through my thumb;

I am dizzy with passion, I'm ashen, I'm weak When we head-bang together, Miss Sharon L. Speke.

How ripping, whenever you're dripping with pleasure;
In all Chipping Sodbury, none has your measure,
With your caustic remarks and your swastikaed hips,
And that mystical kiss on your paper-clipped lips.

Oh! purple-pink paragon! Oh, my love, am I drunk
With your arrogant eyes, my adorable punk?
We sat in the chip-shop in silence last week,
And now I'm shackled up with my Sharon L. Speke.

BILL GREENWELL

Bright the lights on Johnny Awful,
Gay his green and purple hair,
Pin-pierced nose and skin-tight trousers,
Swaying hips and drug-glazed stare;
Life, like history, is bunk,
There's no other God but punk.

In a vicarage near Woking,
Mother wonders who's to blame,
Watching John on television
Belting out his songs of shame;
Pensive, thinks what might have been,
As she sips her Ovaltine.

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

Come, Pistols fans, and dig Sid Slough —
He's playing with the Bollocks now.
I went, with Miss Amanda Hogg,
To hear them at the Puking Dog
(A pub, you know; it's in West Ken
Next to St Cuthbert's, built by Wren).

Sid's hirsute chest was tattooed, 'Vicious' —
Amanda murmured, 'Quite delicious!' —
His purple thatch recalled, I felt,
Some matron from the blue-rinse belt.
The loud, checked trousers of the punters
Reminded me of Billy Bunter's.

Thus captivated, in the crowd
We stood. The music's jolly loud . . .

PETER NORMAN

Her hair was cropped like a Brillo pad,
Dyed crème-de-menthe in strips,
And razor-blades hung like petals
From her nose and ears and lips.

We squelched in the King's Head car-park,
As the New Wave rhythms rose
On the portable recorder
That I nicked from Rumbelows,

And pogoed like fucking maniacs
To Rotten or the Clash
And went once a week to Hammersmith
For our unemployment cash.

But Time falls like a copper's knuckle
On the dreams of Chelsea kids;
And we're both eighteen this summer —
Geriatric, on the skids.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES



Tony Miles

Chess

No 205

Milk v Mineral Water

Whilst I have been winning my fair share of competitions lately thanks to the prevalent rating snobbery in super-tournaments, it is some time since I played a top chess event. Thus, form being the fluctuating thing it is, it was with a mixture of trepidation and anticipation that I accepted an invitation to a strong event at Urbas in Yugoslavia. In one respect the trepidation was well-founded. In the first round, playing the ex-world champion Petrosian, I had carelessly failed to place my standard order for the large quantity of milk that normally drink during play. Instead I innocently consumed the glass of local tonic water that was provided. I am not sure if this particular brew is well known in medical circles, but it is certainly the mos

potent laxative I've ever come across. While my position was still preferable when Petrosian offered a draw, I was running (sic) slightly short of time and decided that discretion was the better part of a nasty mess and accepted. After that it was back to milk and no further trouble.

In fact after eight rounds I had six points, with Sax 5½, Adorjan 5, Petrosian and Jusupov 4½ and the field lost in the distance. On top of that I had the easiest opposition left to play. In the ninth round I drew quickly but all the other relevant games were also drawn. It was in the penultimate round that strange things happened. The tournament consisted of 11 strong GMs and the local young star, Popovic, and I was now paired against him. He was clearly out of his depth having scored 1½/9 to date. Four games were drawn quickly, leaving Sax playing Ivanovic and my own game on stage. After three hours' play there was suddenly a great burst of applause from the Yugoslav crowd (they do that there — it's nice!) and I turned round to see that Sax had resigned. Suddenly I didn't know what to do. I could offer a draw, thus clinching first place, but Popovic was losing to everybody so I could do it in style with another win. Ominously, I was unsure but, with a theatre full of spectators, I decided to go for glory. And, of course, he produced his only good

game and beat me (to much more and louder applause — though it's still nice to have an appreciative audience).

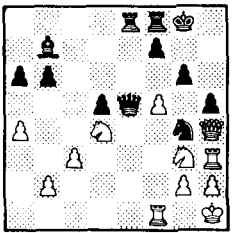
So, in the last round I opted for a spot of discretion again and took a short draw against Gligoric as only the two Hungarians could catch me and neither had an easy task. Adorjan who is very talented, occasionally brilliant (usually against me) but basically spineless, drew his ninth game as I expected. Sax who has very much more spirit but on this occasion would have been better off without it, 'had a go' and was squashed flat in 22 moves by Jusupov. So for me at least it was a happy ending. Petrosian, undoubtedly the world spineless champion, roused himself and ground down Velimirovic in 12 hours (about as much chess as he had played in the whole of the tournament till then) to join the others in second place.

The final scores were (Yugoslavia if not specified) Miles (England) 7, Jusupov, Petrosian (both USSR) and Adorjan (Hungary) 6½, Sax (Hungary) and Ivanovic 6, Gligoric and Kurajica 5½, Ivkov, Velimirovic and Bukic 4½, Popovic 3.

White: B. Ivanovic Black: A.J. Miles
1.P-K4, P-QB4; 2.N-KB3, P-Q3; 3.P-Q4, PxP;
4.NxP, N-KB3; 5.N-QB3, P-KN3; 6.B-K3, B-N2;
7.P-B3,0-0; 8.Q-Q2, N-B3; 9.B-QB4, B-Q2; 10.P-

KR4, R-B1; 11.B-N3, P-KR4; 12.B-N5, R-B4; 13.P-B4, N-B5; 14.Q-Q3, P-N4; 15.P-B5, N-K4; 16.Q-K3; P-R4; 17.PxP; NxNP 18.P-R3, P-N5; 19.BxN, BxB; 20.N-R4, BxN; 21.BxB, Q-N3; 22.R-R3, PxP; 23.QxP, BxN; 24.RxB; RxPch; 25.BxR, QxR; 26.K-N1, R-B1; 27.R-R1, Q-Q7; 28.Q-N3, N-K4; 29.R-QB1, K-B1; 30.P-N3, N-B5; 31.Q-QB3, P-B3; 32.P-K5, QPxP; 33.B-B5, N-R6ch. Resigns.

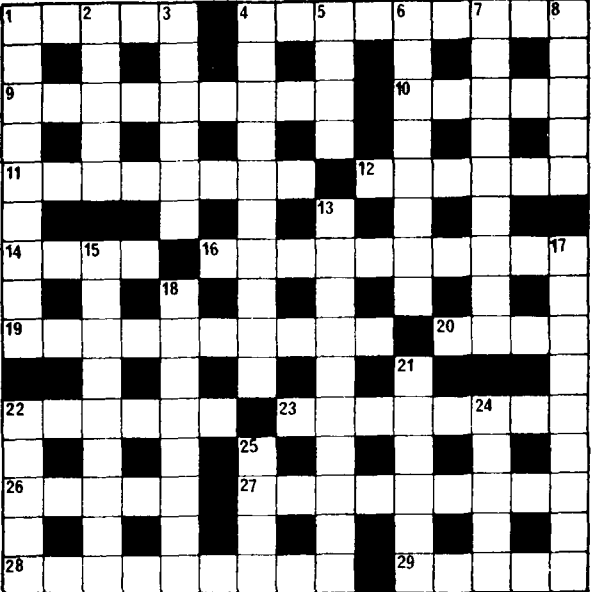
Problem 205
White to play. How should the game go? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked no later than 19 November.



Solution to problem 203
No, I don't think so but there is a good try in 1... R-R6; 2.K-N2, R-Q6; 3.K-B2, R-QB6! (zugzwang) 4.K-K2 (not K-N2, K-N5), R-R6 and now White played 5.K-B2? and after ... K-N5! 6.R-N4 soon lost. If 6.RxP, P-N7! 7.R-N6, R-R8! wins. However, 5.P-B5! holds: PxP; 6.R-R6ch, K-N5; RxR, KxR; 8.K-Q2! drawing.

Weekend Crossword 1362

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1362, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 18 November.



ACROSS

- 1 Shaved and made the old man look sore (5)
- 4 Introductions made before walks? (9)
- 9 A company of the line provided by a group of irregular soldiers (9)
- 10 Either way it goes round (5)
- 11 Promptly about to return thanks for being close (8)
- 12 Not some women without heads (6)
- 14 Windfalls provided for extremities (4)
- 16 Losing it so turn scholar (10)
- 19 Minister carries something to wear in box (10)
- 20 Among you French he would become energetic (4)
- 22 Greek who goes into trance (6)
- 23 Read wrongly after chief magistrate has marked passages (8)
- 26 Call to account at holding a rebellion (5)
- 27 Advantage of having one limb in viper's coils (9)

- 28 Intervenes around first sign of cold — that's what doctor does (9)
- 29 Struggles to utter last words after anaesthetic (5)

DOWN

- 1 One artist mixed up in postcard of fathers (9)
- 2 Ruler comes up carrying duck to put in oven (5)
- 3 In small work rooms I'm making clothes (6)
- 4 Toys with footnote about unprofessional matter (10)
- 5 Current in the restored dynasty (4)
- 6 Involving no harm at scene of battle (8)
- 7 Machine with sound getting ready for shaving (9)
- 8 Old men with anger at heart (5)
- 13 Commercial advantages when one gets cash without pool being disturbed (10)
- 15 Foretold that there was no more drink? (9)
- 17 Fatigue gives one sore appearance after start of training (9)

- 18 Huge carriage with fantastic movement (8)
- 21 So this strait would be restraining (6)
- 22 Working woman married for her attractiveness (5)
- 24 Needed when fishing for river fish (5)
- 25 Place to notice (4)

SET SQUARE

Solution to 1361



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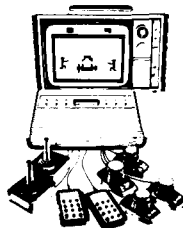
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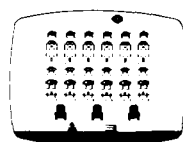
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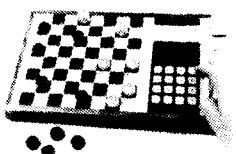


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Programmes and Application Forms for both Courses can be obtained from
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Candidates are accepted by personal interviews only for both Courses.

Theatres

ALDWYCH THEATRE Royal Shakespeare Company 836 6404. Recorded booking info 836 5332. S. cc 379 6233 (10-6, Sats 10-4). Group Sales Box Office 379 6061. From 13 Nov. special return season 'The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby'. RSC also at The Warehouse (836 6808) (from 12 Nov.) in Premiere Production 'The Irish Play' by Ron Hutchinson. RSC also at the Piccadilly Theatre in Willy Russell's hilarious 'Educating Rita'.

NATIONAL THEATRE 928 2252. Olivier (open stage) 'The Romans in Britain' (not suitable for children). 'The Life of Galileo', 'Amadeus', Lyttelton (proscenium stage) 'The Caretaker', 'Watch on the Rhine'. Cottesloe (small auditorium) 'The Crucible'. See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 928 2256.

OLD VIC 928 7616 cc 261 1821 'S'. Evs 7.30 p.m. mats Wed. & Sat. 2 p.m. Until Sat. Leicester Haymarket Theatre Co. with Margaretta Scott, Polly Adams, Joyce Grant & Richard Easton in the original four act version of 'The Importance of Being Earnest'. Evs Mon. & Tues. mat Wed. Peter O'Toole in 'Macbeth' directed by Bryan Forbes. Wed. eve. 'The Merchant of Venice'.

THEATREGOERS - please note: cc - credit cards; S-Student standby.

Meetings

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Enquiries to:

Centre Organiser, 10 St Barnabas
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Telephone: 01-730 0507.

THURSDAY 13 NOVEMBER at 7.30 p.m. Chalk Farm Library, Sharpleshall Street, NW1. Peter Porter, E. A. Markham, Carol Rumens. Tickets £1 and 50p at door.

CENTRAL LONDON MEETING, organised by Socialist Party of Great Britain. 'The Bomb and the Dole Queue - Abolish the Cause'. Monday 10 Nov. 8 p.m. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. 3 speakers, questions & discussions, all welcome.

GRESHAM LECTURES in Astronomy 'Black Holes', by Professor M. Rowan-Robinson, 3 one hour lectures at The City University, Northampton Square, London EC1 at 6 p.m. 13, 20 and 27 November.

GRESHAM LECTURES in Geometry, 'The History of Projective Geometry' by Professor C. W. Kilmister, 3 one-hour lectures at The City University, Northampton Square, London EC1, at 6 p.m. 10, 17 and 24 November.

ICA EVENTS, The Mall, SW1. 9 Nov. 7.00 Artists participating in ICA Main Gallery exhibition 'About Time' discuss the issues raised. (Adm free); 13 Nov. 1.00 Dale Spender discusses her book 'Man Made Language'. Tkt. £1.00. 930 3647.

INCOMES POLICY, Marilyn Rees MP v. Stuart Holland MP, Tuesday 11 November 'That an Incomes Policy is essential to the next Labour Government's Economic Strategy'. Young Fabians, 7.45 p.m. LSE, Houghton St, WC2.

1980 SCHUMACHER LECTURES, Union Building, Bristol University, Saturday, 6 December. Speakers - Shirley Williams, Gerald Leach, Johan Galtung. Tickets £3 (Students £2) from Satish Kumar, Ford House, Hartland, Nr. Bideford, Devon. Tel: (0237 74) 293.

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE, Sunday lectures on religion and philosophy. Enquiries 06285 2464.

R. H. TAWNEY, On the centenary of his birth, Lena Jeger will unveil a G.C. commemorative plaque on Tawney's one time residence at 21 Mecklenburgh Square at 12 noon on Sunday 30 November. All welcome. Tickets for a small reception afterwards are available from Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1, price £2.

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for pamphlets, book list, programme, Sun. 9 Nov. 8 p.m. Open Q/A Meeting 'What Theosophy Explains'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

THE ZIONIST OCCUPATION of Palestine: Commonwealth Institute, London, Wednesday, 19 November, 7.30 p.m. Speakers from NUIS, BAZO-PS. Special Guest speaker: rabbi Moshe Epstein (Neturei Karta). Entry by ticket (free) only. Written application for tickets to 'Ticket Administrator, 75/77 Kenway Rd., SW5.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON, Gower St, WC1E 6BT. Lunch-Hour Lectures, 1.20 to 2. 11 Nov. 'Military Campaigns in the Reign of Tutankhamun' by Dr G.T. Martin; 13 Nov. 'Mosaik in Vertrauen'. Film directed by Peter Kubelka 'Machorka-Muff'. Film directed by Jean-Marie Straub.

Cinema

SCREEN ON THE HILL 435 3366 (opp. Belsize Park Tube). Fassbinder's 'The Marriage of Maria Braun' (AA). 2.10, 4.30, 6.50, 9.10. Ring 435 9787.

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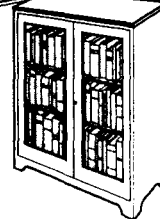
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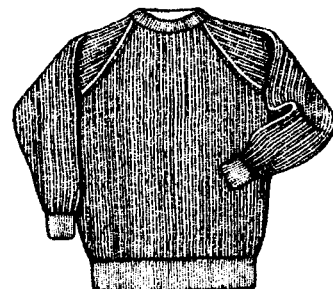
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